

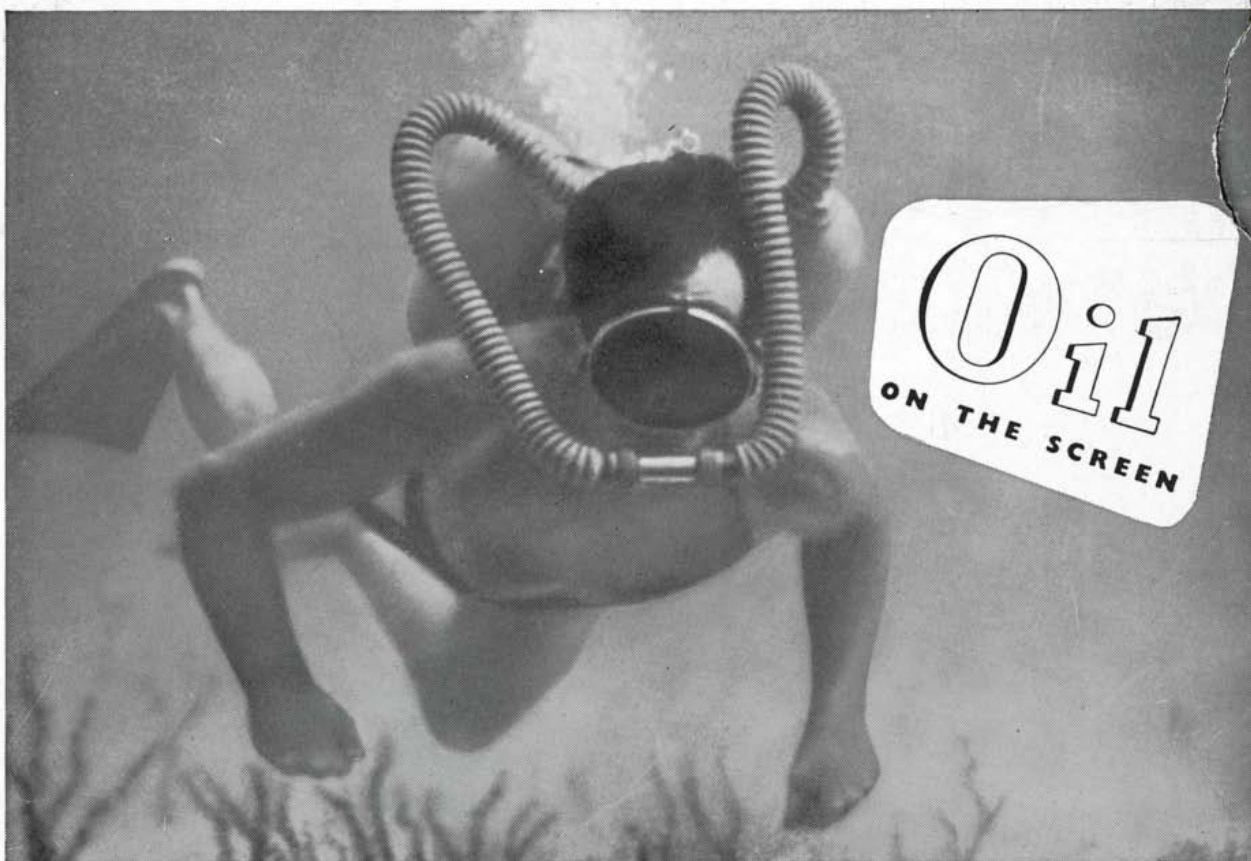
SUMMER 1955

Three Shillings and Sixpence

# SIGHT & SOUND



*The Film Quarterly*



### STATION 307

A new chapter in the story of the search for oil has recently been written. Commandant Cousteau, the famous French underwater explorer, was commissioned to investigate the geology of the sea-bed of the Persian Gulf.

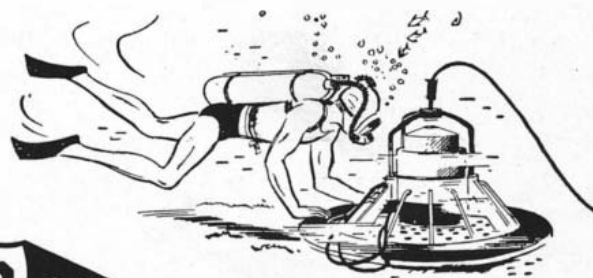
The survey ship *Calypso*, equipped with many special devices, including a submarine gravimeter, took a team of scientists and aqua-lung divers to the area. The film shows the operations on the sea-bed, with the divers protected by a cage against sharks.

The film was made by Commandant Cousteau, who also gives the commentary, and runs for 15 minutes.

distribution in many countries. They also include films of special interest to universities, schools, business and training colleges and scientific societies. Each is available in both 35 mm. and 16 mm. sizes. One of these films is described briefly here, and details of the others in the series can be obtained from the Petroleum Films Bureau from whom all 16 mm. films and selected 35 mm. films may be obtained free of charge.

A SERIES OF FILMS, sponsored by The British Petroleum Company, has been made to illustrate those chapters in the story of the oil industry which are of more popular interest.

All these films have been made to entertain as well as instruct and are already enjoying a wide



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# SIGHT AND SOUND

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ON THE COVER: Fred Astaire and Leslie Caron  
in a dance number from *Daddy Long Legs*

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# THE FRONT PAGE

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THE editorial in our last issue, on the urgent need for admitting new talent into British films and creating conditions favourable to its development, has encountered some adverse comment in an unexpected quarter. An article in the *Cine-Technician* for April, and the letter from George Elvin on page 53, makes it clear that the A.C.T. considers we have done it an injustice.

Much of this letter, and of the article, seems to be based on a misunderstanding, the existence of which has unfortunately prevented any positive response. The rest contains some facts with which no one will disagree. The record of the A.C.T. in advocating an apprenticeship scheme as far back as 1937 is of course well known; and undoubtedly the indifference of producers today to any such scheme, and the reality of decreased employment in the industry as a whole, are powerful drawbacks. (In passing, one would like to know how many of the 300 new entrants Mr. Elvin states the A.C.T. admitted last year were laboratory workers, newsreel technicians or production secretaries, and how many gained jobs on the floor that directly associated them with the creative side of film-making.) It certainly does not follow, in any case, that a "flood of new labour," or an outburst of "nepotism" would be the result of the very limited intake we suggested.

More important is a broader misunderstanding of the editorial as a whole, which was concerned with the lack of facilities for providing creative new talent for British films, a problem which affects the entire industry. The pressing need is for the development of new directors, writers, editors, directors of photography, for all kinds of creative technicians; the maintenance of employment on an operative level is, of course, the A.C.T.'s own province, and the British cinema, in its very chequered career, has many reasons to be grateful for its work in this sphere. If it were simply a matter of admitting new entrants as and when vacancies occur, there would be little cause for alarm; but the situation is more demanding than that.

Broadly speaking, a film industry can offer three points of entry for creative talent. It may let it "work its way up from the bottom of the ladder," as Mr. Hyams in his letter considers to be the only answer; it may throw open and speed up technical training through special schools and schemes—as in the University film schools in America, and the Government-aided centres in Paris, Rome and Moscow; and it may, if producers are enterprising, attract and employ talent from other media, notably the theatre—as Broadway, in the figures of Cukor, Welles, Sturges, Kanin, Kazan and others, has proved a fruitful source for Hollywood. Without decrying the importance of thorough first-hand knowledge and experience, it is worth emphasising that other methods have yielded valuable results in other countries. A tradition of enterprise, and of alliance with the other arts, has enabled such diverse artists as

Renoir, Welles, Cocteau, Vigo, Ophuls, Pagnol and Kanin, to name only a few, to start effectively at the top of the ladder. In the British film industry, which lacks both a training school and a tradition of fertile exchange with the other arts, creative talents of the future too often spend frustrating years working their way up, and it is no accident that many a "promising young director" is discovered nearing the age of 40.

Mr. Elvin's letter suggests that SIGHT AND SOUND and the British Film Institute should assume responsibility for initiating apprenticeship schemes. But any such enterprise requires not only money (which is why the scheme for training overseas students has not yet materialised) and a reasonable assurance that if people are trained they will be able to find work, but a friendly and encouraging climate. Conditions under which Group 3 was unable to impose itself, under which Paul Dickson, director of the exceptionally talented *David*, has made only TV films in the four years since it appeared, and under which our major circuits rejected *Thursday's Children*, make it clear that such a climate does not exist. While of course it is consoling to point to the obvious exception of Sir Michael Balcon at Ealing, one Ealing cannot make a summer, however gallantly it tries.

The answer lies now in the uncertain structure and generally over-cautious temper of our industry. The general policy of producers is to try and make the best of what they have got and never take a risk when it can be avoided. The A.C.T. is concerned with helping its existing members to stay in work, and to prevent new people entering the industry at their expense. This, alas, is not "facing up to the problems involved," but fighting to maintain a precarious *status quo*. For the problems are these. First, to attract new creative talent to our cinema, a positive recruiting policy is needed—not only to attract the best talent from outside, from schools, universities and elsewhere, but also to bring forward those already within the industry whose promise needs to be developed. Such a policy would require a fully equipped training centre, as in other countries, with comprehensive courses and facilities for experimental work. There would also need to be an agreement with producers and the A.C.T. whereby a small quota of top students can be given jobs in the industry. Secondly, producers must always be on the lookout for talent from the other arts, and ready to take chances with it. For only by a strong infusion of new creative vitality can our film industry hope both to secure its future and to renew itself by extending its subject matter and shooting methods, its whole imaginative range.

The more open to ideas and imagination a film industry is, the more it ultimately prospers—offering richer rewards both in art and entertainment, and in continuity of full employment. It is a matter of film history that material prosperity does not last for long without creative force. And today, of course, there is the impending competition of TV—which, we repeat, is far more likely at the moment to attract and develop the newcomer.

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Opposite: Katharine Hepburn and Rossano Brazzi in "Summer Madness," David Lean's film of "The Time of the Cuckoo," a play by Arthur Laurents.

# A GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Films likely to be of special interest to SIGHT AND SOUND readers are denoted by one, two or three stars.

**BATTLE CRY** (Warners) Mainly a wolf call. Inordinate footage is dedicated to the sex lives of a marine corps that finally goes into action at Saipan. (Aldo Ray, Van Heflin, Dorothy Malone : director, Raoul Walsh. CinemaScope and Warner-Color.)

**BRIGADOON** (M.G.M.) Rather dispirited version of the stage musical about a Highland village that comes to life for one day every 100 years. The film comes to life for about five minutes in New York. (Gene Kelly, Cyd Charisse, Van Johnson : director, Vincente Minnelli. CinemaScope and Ansicolor.)

**CAMILLE** (M.G.M.) Garbo in her most classic part. George Cukor's sympathetic direction ensures that the vehicle is worthy of the actress. Reviewed. (Robert Taylor, Laura Hope Crews, Lionel Barrymore. 1936.)

**CONFESSION** (Anglo-Amalgamated) British murder mystery in which a priest can't help the police without violating the secrecy of the confessional. But the killer finally topples off the church tower. (Sydney Chaplin, Audrey Dalton, John Bentley : director, Ken Hughes.)

**DADDY LONG LEGS** (Fox) Leslie Caron as the orphan who falls in love with her guardian : elaborate but only medium musical based on the sentimental old stager. (Fred Astaire, Thelma Ritter : director, Jean Negulesco. CinemaScope and De Luxe Color.)

**DAM BUSTERS, THE** (A.B.-Pathé) Story of the raid on the Ruhr dams, and Barnes Wallis' patient experiments to develop the right weapon for it : a sober, honest and cleanly told war film. (Richard Todd, Michael Redgrave : director, Michael Anderson.)

**EAST OF EDEN** (Warners) An episode from Steinbeck's novel about two rival brothers in a Californian family 40 years ago : heavy Biblical parallels and persistent over-direction by Elia Kazan. Reviewed. (James Dean, Julie Harris, Raymond Massey. CinemaScope and Warner-Color.)

**ESCAPE TO BURMA** (R.K.O.) A lady elephant-and-teak owner in Burma shelters and falls in love with an alleged murderer on the run. (Barbara Stanwyck, Robert Ryan, David Farrar : director, Allan Dwan. SuperScope and Technicolor.)

**FAR HORIZONS, THE** (Paramount) The adventures of Lewis and Clark, commissioned in 1803 by President Jefferson to explore the Louisiana Purchase territory and reach the Pacific coast. Good pioneering subject lost to dull script, slack direction and an overdose of squaw trouble. (Charlton Heston, Fred MacMurray, Donna Reed : director, Rudolph Mate. VistaVision and Technicolor.)

**FEMALE ON THE BEACH** (Rank) Joan Crawford as a wealthy widow with an eccentric wardrobe, pursued by and pursuing a rugged gigolo. Blazing with love-hate ; rewarding for specialists. (Jeff Chandler, Jan Sterling : director, Joseph Pevney.)

**HIT THE DECK** (M.G.M.) Three sailors on leave encounter three girls, but the result is no *On the Town*. (Jane Powell, Tony Martin, Debbie Reynolds : director, Roy Rowland. CinemaScope and Eastmancolor.)

**I HAVE A NEW MASTER** (Film Traders) Pleasant, warm-hearted account of a new teacher who reforms a derelict Provencal school and brightens the lives of his pupils. (Bernard Blier, Delmont : director, Jean-Paul Le Chanois. 1948.)

**JUPITER'S DARLING** (M.G.M.) Flippant and sprightly musical, vaguely connected with Robert Sherwood's *Road to Rome*. Hannibal sings, elephants dance, Esther Williams swims. (Howard Keel, Marge and Gower Champion : director, George Sidney. CinemaScope and Eastmancolor.)

**KID FOR TWO FARTHING, A** (British Lion) Carol Reed does not seem at ease with this fable of an East End boy who finds a unicorn that he believes will grant his wishes. A skilfully mounted but synthetic whimsy. Reviewed. (Jonathan Ashmore, Celia Johnson, Diana Dors, David Kossoff. Eastmancolor.)

**LOVERS OF LISBON** (Films de France) Trevor Howard as a malevolent Scotland Yard inspector on the track of murderers Daniel Gelin and Françoise Arnoul. Locations (Portuguese) fresher and prettier than the material. (Director, Henri Verneuil.)

**MARTY** (U.A.) TV play into film : charming, touching "offbeat" picture about two people in the Bronx who believe themselves too plain to be loved. Reviewed. (Ernest Borgnine, Betsy Blair : director, Delbert Mann.)

**MOONFLEET** (M.G.M.) J. Meade Faulkner's smuggling story becomes an elegant gothic melodrama : dark family secrets, churchyards at night, skulls and storms, and Joan Greenwood splendid as Lady Clarissa, the villainess. (Stewart Granger, George Sanders, Jon Whiteley, Viveca Lindfors : director, Fritz Lang. CinemaScope and Eastmancolor.)

**NEW YORK CONFIDENTIAL** (Warners) Violence-packed racketeering melodrama, just one unpleasant corpse after another. (Richard Conte, Broderick Crawford, Marilyn Maxwell : director, Russell Rouse.)

**PICASSO** (Film Traders) Luciano Emmer's 40-minute study of the painter's work, an intelligent and unusually discerning art film in spite of an occasionally pretentious commentary. Reviewed. (Ferrariacolor.)

**PRINCE OF PLAYERS** (Fox) Romanticised biography of famous American actor Edwin Booth : solidly conventional but redeemed by fine acting from Richard Burton and Eva Le Gallienne and generous helpings of Shakespeare. (John Derek, Raymond Massey, Elizabeth Sellars : director, Philip Dunne. CinemaScope and De Luxe Color.)

**RAGE AU CORPS, LA** (Curzon) A nymphomaniac from a hydraulic installation finds life in the big city altogether too much for her. Fairly sleazy. (Francoise Arnoul, Raymond Pellegrin : director, Ralph Habib.)

**RHAPSODY** (M.G.M.) Elizabeth Taylor as a girl torn between love for a violinist and a pianist : glossy soap opera, with lots of Tchaikovsky, Mendelssohn, Rachmaninov, and snippets from Liszt. (Vittorio Gassman, John Ericson : director, Charles Vidor. Technicolor.)

**RIFI** (Miracle) Inventively made and entertaining French underworld thriller, directed by Jules Dassin. Excellent Paris locations and a clever 30-minute robbery sequence without a word spoken. (Jean Servais, Jules Dassin.)

**SECRET, THE** (Eros) British-made thriller about a shiftless American looking for diamonds inside a teddy bear in Brighton. (Sam Wanamaker, Mandy Miller : director, C. Raker Endfield.)

**SEVEN LITTLE FOYS, THE** (Paramount) Bob Hope sadly but gamely bludgeons through an unflattering and inaccurate semi-musical account of Eddie Foy's private and professional life. (Milly Vitale : director, Melville Shavelson. VistaVision and Technicolor.)

**SHAN-PO AND INYU-TAI** (Gala) Modern Chinese folk opera based on a 7th century legend, and played entirely by girls. A delicate, beautiful and wholly entrancing novelty. Reviewed. (Yuan Hsueh-Fen, Fen Jui-Chuan, Chang Kuei-Feng : directors, Sang Hu and Huang Sha. Agfacolor.)

**SILVER CHALICE, THE** (Warners) Tribulations of the early Christians reduced to grandiose fauity. (Pier Angeli, Virginia Mayo, Jack Palance, Paul Newman : director, Victor Saville. CinemaScope and Warner-Color.)

**STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND** (Paramount) Lengthy propagandist tribute to the U.S. Air Force's long-range bombing force, with fine aerial sequences and a crippling story about a wife's efforts to keep her husband on the ground. (James Stewart, June Allyson : director, Anthony Mann. VistaVision and Technicolor.)

**THIS IS CINERAMA** (Cinerama Productions) The biggest of all the big screens, and as a stunt undoubtedly the best. Plenty of impressive *trompe l'oeil* and a highly effective airplane tour of the U.S.A. (Producers, Lowell Thomas and Merian C. Cooper. Print by Technicolor.)

**20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA** (Disney) Jules Verne adapted by Disney, with the atom bomb added to Nemo's discoveries. The undersea episodes have style and atmosphere, though more could have been made of the *Nautilus*. Reviewed. (Kirk Douglas, James Mason, Peter Lorre, Paul Lukas : director, Richard Fleischer. CinemaScope and Technicolor.)

**ULYSSES** (Archway) Homer sketchily telescoped and modernised, with little flair for spectacle and adventure. (Kirk Douglas, Sylvana Mangano, Anthony Quinn : director, Mario Camerini. Technicolor.)

**VANISHING PRAIRIE, THE** (Disney) Most successful of the Disney nature films, with superb camerawork and fewer gimmicks than usual. Fine shots of mountain lions and outstanding sequence devoted to the stalwart and engaging prairie dogs. (Director, James Algar. Print by Technicolor.)

**VIOLENT SATURDAY** (Fox) CinemaScoped thriller about a bank hold-up in a mid-Western town, with plausible backgrounds, some violence, and superficial observation of small-town intrigues. (Victor Mature, Richard Egan, Stephen McNally : director, Richard Fleischer. De Luxe Color.)



# In the Picture

## "The Wild One" at Cambridge

LESLIE HALLIWELL writes: Stanley Kramer's production of *The Wild One*, banned as undesirable by the British Board of Film Censors, was passed by the Cambridge justices with a local "X" certificate for showing at the Rex last April, where almost all Kramer's other films have played. At first no one realised that this would be a unique British première, but the *Daily Express* made the story front page news, and Columbia was not slow with its publicity, despite the newspaper strike. Hundreds of letters reached the cinema, some from towns as far away as Bristol, Manchester and Southsea, but mostly from London cineastes and Brando fans. Several magazines sent reporters, and the literary weeklies praised the film; motorcycle clubs turned up in force, and a sprinkling of national celebrities wrote to reserve seats. Cambridge's own cinema-goers, not normally "X"-minded, were intrigued by the publicity and flocked along with the rest; most, however, were disappointed. The hoodlum theme, the difficult slang, the tentative story and the lack of a solution bewildered and usually repelled all but specialists. Women in particular were seldom charmed by the picture. "*Wasn't worth tuppence*," said one indignantly. "*I don't know why they show such things*." But what was most held against it was its complete morality; the general public could see no reason whatever for the ban. Having deluded themselves into expecting a sexual orgy or a bout of blood-letting, they were indignant to find a film which dealt with brutality of mind rather than body, a film which was not so much a demonstration as a warning. As someone said, "*You can see worse things than that in any second-feature Western*." On the other hand, the thinking members of the audience were generally impressed by it both as social document and as work of art, and several compared it favourably with *On the Waterfront*, which



Paolo Stoppa, Franca Valeri and Raf Vallone in "*The Sign of Venus*," a new social comedy by Dino Risi.

had an "A" certificate but was considered more blood-thirsty and less moral.

The university's attitude to the film was odd. Senior members stayed away, as from a bad smell; undergraduates proved considerably less interested than they had been in *Animal Farm* the previous week, and the reactions of those who came were unpredictable. Many shrugged and went their way, a few thought it brilliant, but almost everyone had reservations and there were several who found the film an utter bore, preferring the melodramatics of *Waterfront*.

It is difficult to resist two conclusions. Firstly, that banning led almost everyone to expect the wrong type of film; secondly, that if *The Wild One* had been released in the normal way with an "A" certificate, it would have caused no sensation and have appealed to the limited audiences that liked *The Men*, *Cyrano* and *Death of a Salesman*. It treats a vital subject in a manner singularly casual and detached, examining but refusing to diagnose; in common with most Kramer productions, it aims not to please but to provoke.

## A(2)

*Focus*, the organ of the Catholic Film Institute, announced in its January issue a significant development in its film reviewing policy: "In conformity with the suggestions contained in the Message of the Holy See to the General Council of the Office Catholique Internationale du Cinéma . . . and acting upon the wishes expressed by the English Hierarchy . . . it is proposed in future to establish for use in this country a modification of the system of Moral Classification of films at present obtaining in the Continental countries." It would, *Focus* claimed, "be sufficient if those rare cases of morally pernicious films which escape the attention and terms of reference of the B.B.F.C. are included in our lists." To date, *Sensualita*, *Le Blé en Herbe* and *This is My Love*

Kenneth More and Vivien Leigh in the CinemaScoped "*The Deep Blue Sea*," directed by Anatole Litvak.



have been graded "A(2)" ("should be avoided because of its persistent atmosphere of moral degradation or the negation of moral values"); "A(1)" gradings ("containing elements requiring a certain reservation") have been given to *So This Is Paris*, *There's No Business Like Show Business*, *Six Bridges to Cross*, *The Man Who Loved Redheads* and *Trois Femmes*. All four American films in this list, it may be noted, also received "B" (objectionable in part) ratings from the American Legion of Decency. On the other hand, *The Barefoot Contessa*, *Phffft*, *Vera Cruz*, and *Carmen Jones*, also rated as "objectionable in part" by the Legion of Decency, are apparently regarded as morally innocuous for adults (and, in the case of *Vera Cruz*, adolescents) by Britain's Catholic Film Institute.

## Homage to United Artists

The recent National Film Theatre programme under this title, celebrating the company's 35th anniversary, paid tribute to its remarkable quartet of founders with revivals of some of their most famous works: Chaplin's *The Gold Rush*, Griffith's *Way Down East*, with its unforgettable performance by Lillian Gish, the Fairbanks-Pickford *Taming of the Shrew* and *The Three Musketeers*. Rewarding not only in themselves, these programmes coincided with the company's own renaissance; the fortunes of the Corporation have fluctuated somewhat in the last fifteen years, but since Arthur Krim and Robert S. Benjamin became respectively president and chairman of the board, the policy of building up a distribution organisation for independent production of high



A scene from Alberto Lattuada's new film, "Scuola Elementare" with Lise Bourdin as a teacher from Southern Italy who comes to work in Milan.

quality has been revived. Today the company has an impressive list of producers and directors associated with it, including Stanley Kramer, Joseph Mankiewicz, the Harold Hecht-Burt Lancaster group and the units recently formed by Henry Fonda and Kirk Douglas.

## "Invitation to the Dance"

At a recent Press conference in London, Gene Kelly gave some welcome

news of his *Invitation to the Dance*, the three-part Technicolor ballet film he made for M-G-M in this country over two years ago. Owing to technical difficulties, the third ballet, involving two live figures (Kelly himself and a nine-year-old boy) who dance with a number of cartoon ones, had to be realised in Hollywood, where the lengthy process of frame-by-frame animation, particularly exacting when a smooth choreographic movement has to be achieved, has now been completed. The film itself, of course, is a daring experiment; it has no linking plot, no commentary, and its three separate ballets—a romantic circus tale, a satire on modern sexual relations, and the combined human-and-cartoon finale—contain no famous film names apart from Kelly's. The dancers, though, include Youskevitch, Toumanova and Claire Sombert. *Invitation to the Dance*, eagerly awaited, should be one of the most fascinating films of its kind ever made.

## Return Engagement

KAREL REISZ writes: As a return engagement to the meetings with British film-makers which were held last year in London during the Italian film-week, the film section of the Italian Government invited the British Film Institute this year to bring out a "cultural" delegation to Italy. The conference, held in Rome in mid-May, turned out to be pleasantly informal and extremely rewarding. The small delegation led by Sir Michael Balcon, and including Joan Greenwood, Anthony Havelock-Allan, Henry Cornelius, Denis Forman, Roger Manvell, Arthur Watkins and Basil Wright, delivered lectures and presented

Betty Garrett and Janet Leigh in a number from "My Sister Eileen," the film of "Wonderful Town," directed by Richard Quire.





some new British films—*The Maggie, A Kid for Two Farthings, Animal Farm* and *The Prisoner*. In spite of the fact that the delegation arrived at a time of acute crisis for the Italian industry—the Circolo Romano del Cinema (a sort of Italian Film Academy) had just issued a manifesto denouncing the government's film policy—our hosts were splendidly generous with their hospitality and time. Castellani, Blasetti, Lattuada, Emmer and Giannini regularly attended the lectures and contributed to the discussions, both formal and personal. Arthur Watkins' admirable survey of British film censorship was enthusiastically received, the subject being of the greatest interest to the Italian film-makers just now.

It is not easy to draw up a balance sheet of the achievements at a conference of this sort: its main value lies in the stimulation of personal meetings and the exchange of background information about the other country's films. The (rightly) rather academic programme of lectures, and the absence of Press conferences demanding "official" pronouncements, created an atmosphere conducive to frank talk, and it may be that the conference unwittingly established a precedent for future meetings of this kind.

The most gratifying single event of the

conference was the showing of some of Humphrey Jennings' films. The poetry of *Listen to Britain* and the neo-realism (as they chose to call it) of *Fires Were Started* came as a revelation to our hosts, and a series of screenings was arranged for the Circolo Romano del Cinema.

### Gala Première

GENE MOSKOWITZ writes: The water city of Venice looked even more agreeable and glittering than usual on a May morning that United Artists, in conjunction with independent producer Ilya Lopert, set down over 100 journalists from the United States, England and France for the world première of David Lean's *Summer Madness*, starring Katharine Hepburn and Rossano Brazzi. A sunny day greeted the lucky correspondents, who had a whole morning to wander about by themselves. There was an activity and an expectant air along the piazzas; one felt like rushing to the Rialto to welcome a ship just in from the Orient, or to find Volpone and Mosca up to some bawdy tricks. However, everyone assembled calmly at noon for a trip to Torcello and a luncheon to meet our hosts. Present were Isa Miranda, who had recovered from her ill feelings which almost led to a lawsuit when she found

that her important dramatic scenes had been cut from the film, and Sylvana Pampanini, truculent, engaging and infinitely sympathetic, full of admiration for Abel Gance and wanting to know how *La Tour de Nesles* (in which she stars) had been received.

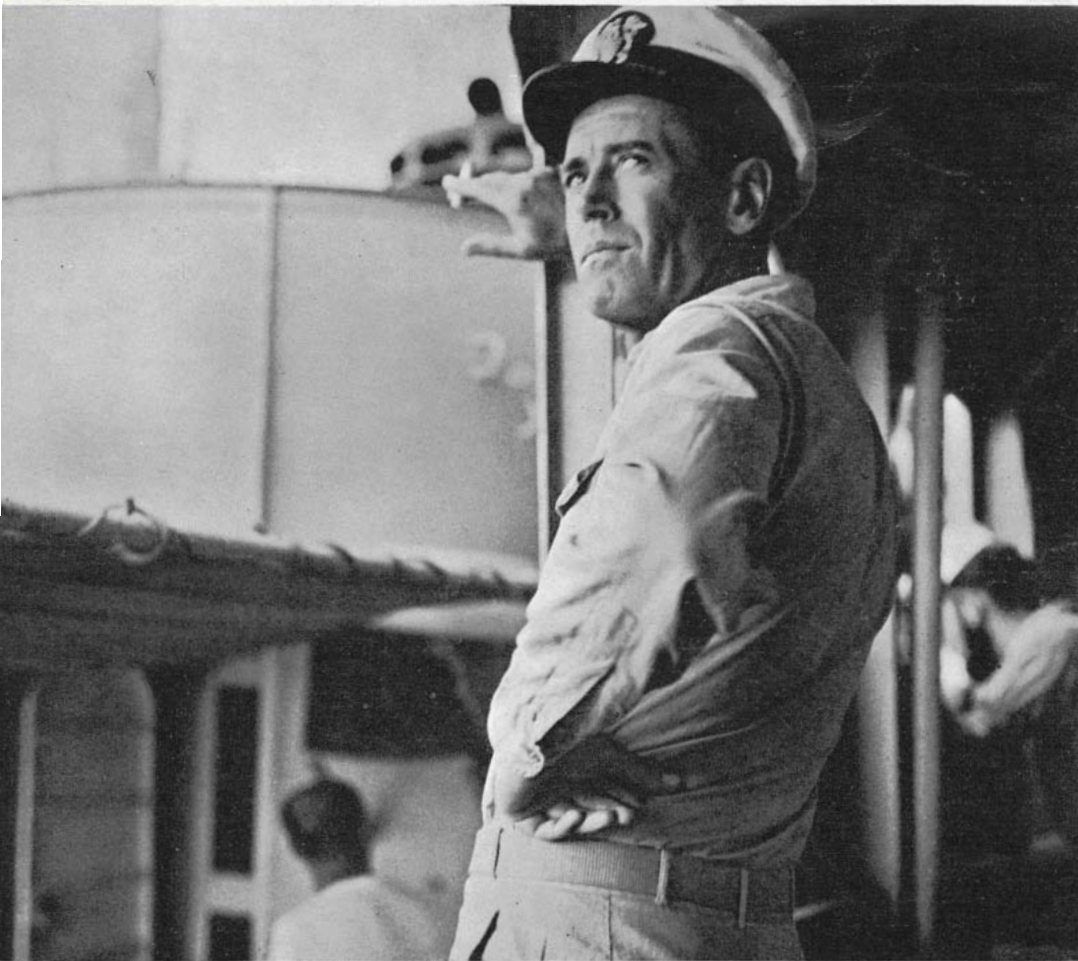
The journalists arrived in formal wear for the gala première that evening in the Palazzo Grassi, which had been adorned with a wide screen; the projection booth for this Renaissance open air theatre was ensconced on a nearby roof. Ilya Lopert made a speech of welcome, read a telegram from David Lean, who could not attend, and pointed out that Katharine Hepburn, being in Australia with the *Old Vic*, could not come either.

Then the neighbouring rooftop flung its first beam on the screen, and the film started. We were on a train coming down the long narrow rail track into Venice. An angular, avid tourist was taking home movies from the train, and David Lean was off on another of his wispy craftsmanlike films which mask a certain coldness to the subject in a good deal of brilliant imagery. Here, in the story of a brittle, middle-aged American private secretary who has come to Europe to find a release and beauty which she hardly dares name as love, is also a study in the basic misunderstandings between

An Eskimo girl in "Where Mountains Float," a 45-minute film on Greenland, made in Eastmancolour for the Danish Government by Bjarne Henning-Jensen.







Henry Fonda returns to the screen after six years' absence in the adaptation of Joshua Logan's play "Mister Roberts," co-directed by Mervyn LeRoy and John Ford. Other players include Jack Lemmon, James Cagney and William Powell.

New and Old World attitudes; but Lean's twice removal, depicting an American and Italian clash of outlook, may be another factor that makes the characters unclearly motivated and only intermittently convincing.

If the all too brief encounter rarely tackles its major problems of differing moralities, solitude, and the need for love, Lean has explored and tenderly depicted Venice in all its fading splendours, and Katharine Hepburn, though occasionally overdoing her "laughter-through-tears" technique, has some moving moments and attitudes. One's chief memory of the event, and of the film, in fact, is of Venice.



"I'm not a Shakespeare man. A lot of his plays are badly constructed, and I'm not taken in by the poetry."—*Elia Kazan*, quoted in *Variety*.

✦

This beautifully photographed picture (*That Lady*), filmed chiefly in Spain, directed by Terence Young and produced by Sy Bartlett, contains all the ingredients of mass entertainment, bullfights, duels by night and torture scenes—*News Special* from 20th Century-Fox.

## Work in Progress

### Great Britain

Peter Glenville: *Her Chocolate Soldier*, adapted from Shaw's *Arms and the Man*, with Alec Guinness and Claire Bloom.

Michael Anderson: *1984*, with Edmond O'Brien as Winston Smith and Jan Sterling as Julia.

### U.S.A.

Alfred Hitchcock: a remake of his own (1934) thriller, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, with Doris Day and James Stewart, and location shooting in London and French Morocco. (VistaVision, Technicolor.)

Until I saw Grace Kelly I could not decide whether a flower or a woman was more beautiful. Now I say—woman!—*Letter to Picturegoer*.

✦

London's West End has become accustomed to the film première, but all that hectic excitement pales beside the reported goings-on at a recent première in Zahle, Lebanon, of the CinemaScope film *The Robe*. The ceremonies observed on this occasion included the slaughtering of a lamb at the entrance to the cinema, while the owner of the cinema, his brother, and the cinema staff danced around the victim. Blood was lavishly sprinkled on the steps leading to the foyer and prayers were offered for "good luck and the future of CinemaScope."—*Manchester Guardian*.

✦

British studio technical experts, who meet frequently as a committee under

Joshua Logan: *Picnic*, from William Inge's play, starring Rosalind Russell and William Holden. (CinemaScope, Technicolor.)

Robert Aldrich: Clifford Odets' play about Hollywood, *The Big Knife*, with Jack Palance, Ida Lupino, Shelley Winters.

### France

René Clement: Zola's *L'Assommoir*, with Maria Schell.

Luis Bunuel: *Cela s'appelle L'Aurore*, from a novel with a Corsican setting by Emmanuel Robles.

Marc Allegret: an adaptation of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, with Danielle Darrieux, Leo Genn, Erno Grisa.

## Walter Fuller

ERNEST LINDGREN writes: We were shocked to learn of the sudden death of Walter Fuller on June 7th. He had been a Governor of the British Film Institute continuously since November, 1935, and his passing severs the last link with the Governing Board of the Institute's earliest years. His record of twenty years' service as a Governor is, indeed, unique; and now likely to remain so. Walter Fuller himself, with the characteristic twinkle of a bland, sceptical eye, would be the first to discount any sentimental suggestion at this moment that he was always a hundred per cent advocate of Institute policies. He was first and foremost a loyal servant of his employers, the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association, and on their behalf was frequently critical of Institute activities. On all matters in which he saw no conflict with his Association's interests, however, he was most willing to give the Institute all help in his power, and on countless occasions, whether he approved or whether he criticised, the Institute had reason to be deeply grateful for his shrewd realism and understanding.

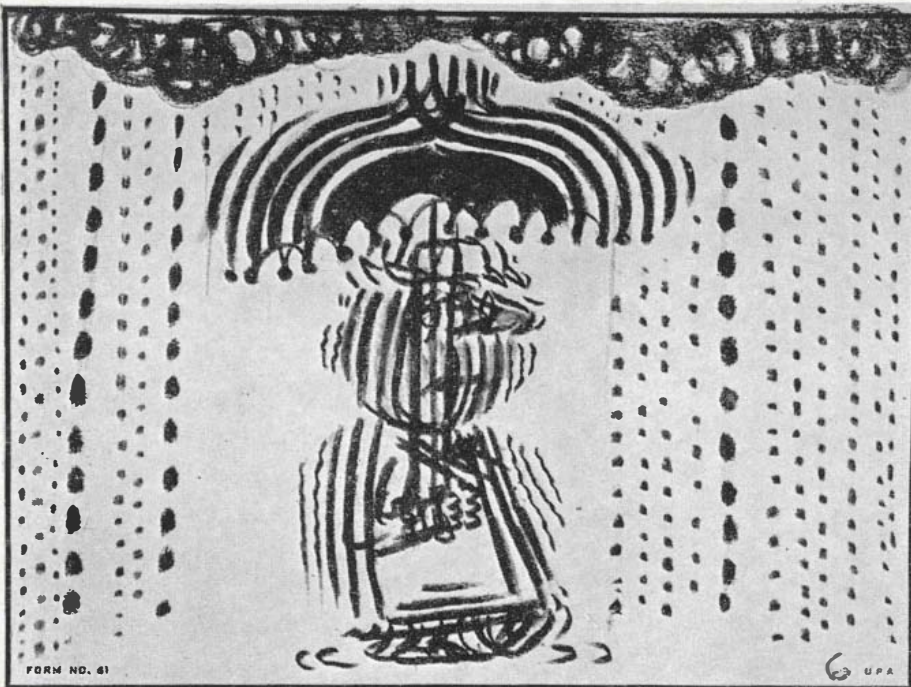
In recent years, the staff of the Institute working in the same building as himself saw him almost daily, and not only received personal kindness from him, but also caught the glow of the great zest with which he always enjoyed life. We extend our deep sympathy to Mrs. Fuller and her daughters.

the auspices of the B.F.P.A., are still concerning themselves with the aspect ratio of B.B.F.C. certificates. . . . Experiments are still proceeding for a B.B.F.C. certificate with a ratio of 2:1, and among the difficulties were the problems of composition in the studios and obtaining a picture which will fill the screen and yet give satisfactory projection.—*The Cinema*.

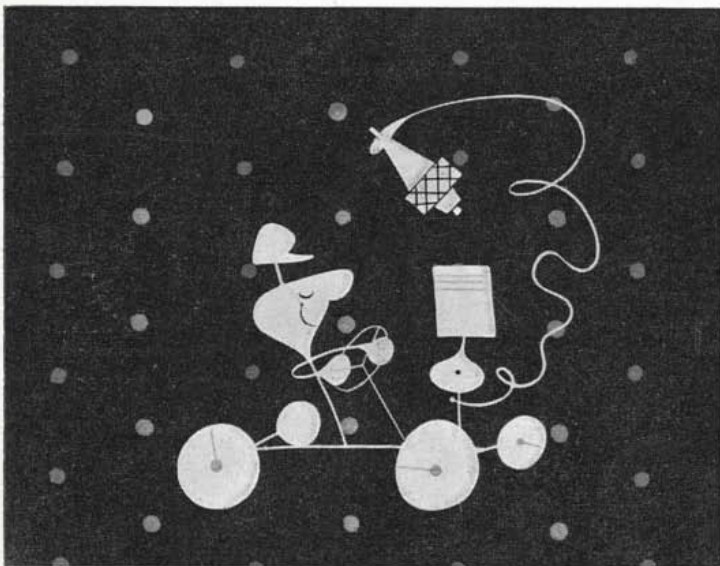
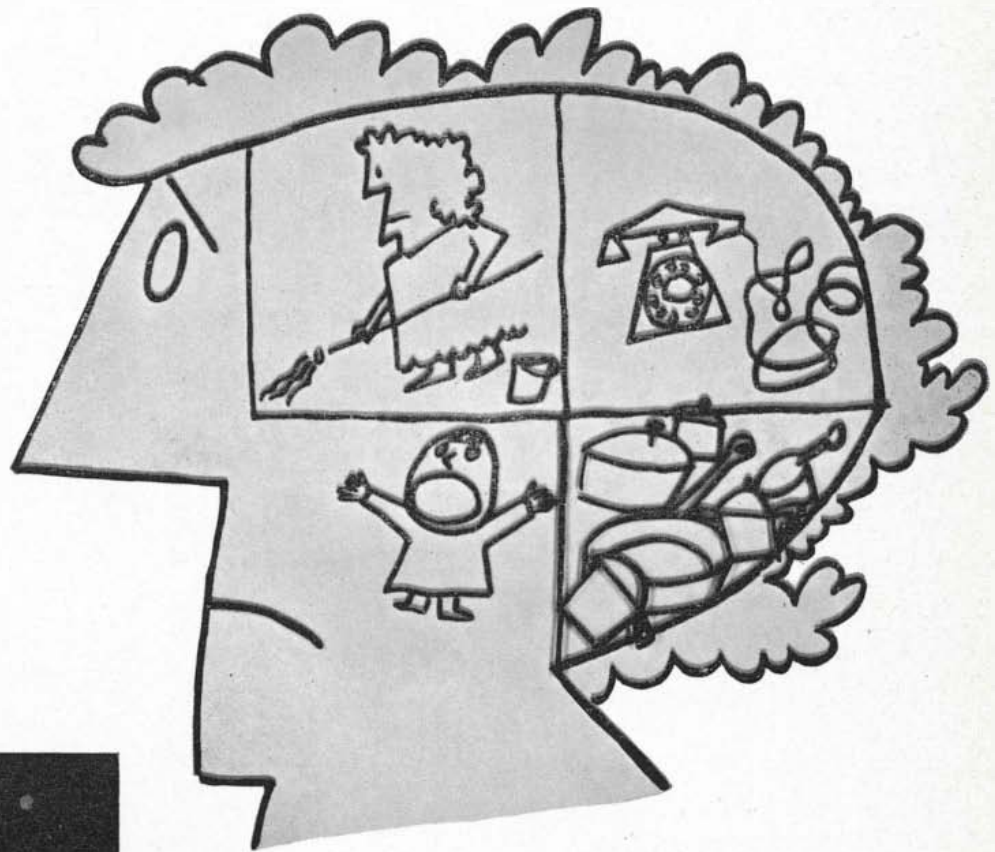
✦

King Vidor . . . was searching for a way of making Kirk Douglas's first kiss with Jeanne Crain in Universal-International's *Man Without a Star* entirely different. "It occurred to me," said Vidor, "that a girl sitting in a rocking-chair could be tilted back with a grace and ease which could be achieved under no other conditions. This method made yielding more plausible. In the script, the girl doesn't like the guy to begin with."—*Hollywood Newsreel*.





## T.V. SPOTS



Examples of new cartoon work for American television, by U.P.A. and by John Hubley, formerly with U.P.A. but now working with an independent company. Top left, U.P.A.'s "Bromo Quinine," written, designed and directed for Bromo Quinine by Leo Salkin. Top right, "Ford 'Bird'," by John Hubley, for the Ford Motor Company. Above, Saul Steinberg's design for "Busy, busy, busy day," produced for Jello by U.P.A., directed by Gene Deitch. Left, "Dry Bones," by John Hubley, for 'Speedway 79' gas. These films last from 20 to 60 seconds.

# The Undiscovered Country

by PENELOPE HOUSTON

*"The place to look for the germs of the future England is in the light-industry areas and along the arterial roads. . . . In these vast new wildernesses of glass and brick the sharp distinctions of the older type of town, with its slums and mansions . . . no longer exist. There are wide gradations of income, but it is the same kind of life that is being lived at different levels, in labour-saving flats or Council houses, along the concrete roads and in the naked democracy of the swimming pools."*

—George Orwell.

THE strength of any national cinema ultimately depends upon the degree of honesty with which it records the forces at work upon a people, the especial temper of a nation. This is a contentious statement—cutting across the notion of the cinema as an "international" art—which happens to be supported by a certain weight of evidence. The Soviet cinema had its origin in a moment of revolution and liberation, and the excitement went out of it when it was enlisted as an instrument of official policy on the side of order and stabilisation; Italian neo-realism owes its influence to the particular urgency of its concern with the world as it is; Hollywood traditionally exploits the native American journalistic talent, the reporter's instinct for the story behind the news; and the British cinema, after documentary had established contact with social reality during the 'thirties, strengthened its hold when it reflected the determination and the tensions of the war years. By its nature, the cinema is committed to the present. For a while, the current runs strongly; and it is when a national cinema loses this vitalising contact with actuality, with the contemporary preoccupations, whatever these may be, that its sense of direction falters.

After the war, the British cinema ran the risk of finding itself in this predicament. A reputation had been achieved by films of a particular type, firmly based on documentary observation, and concerned primarily to record experience. An emotional need in the audience was satisfied by these pictures, which held the mirror up to life at a flattering angle, stressed the more military virtues, comfortingly reminded us that we were "all in this together"—and at the same time put a moment of history on the screen in a way that people living through it felt to be true. In the somewhat apathetic post-war period, understandably enough, British studios embarked on various forms of escapism. At one end of the scale were the garish historical

romances whose trademark was the incongruously gracious smile of the Gainsborough Lady; at the remote extreme were the distinguished literary adaptations, David Lean's *Great Expectations* and *Oliver Twist*, Laurence Olivier's Shakespearean films, Thorold Dickinson's *Queen of Spades*, or the elegant and unmistakably literary *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. Another kind of reputation was built up by these films, and by the Ealing comedies with their deliberately fantastically view of the native scene, their celebration of communities in overt rebellion against restrictions, ration-books and the tyranny of bureaucracy.

But this particular joke—in itself a good one—scarcely out-last-ed the end of rationing. By the time of Ealing's *Titfield Thunderbolt* and Group 3's *Laxdale Hall* and *Conflict of Wings*, these village resistance movements were beginning to look as exasperatingly quaint as a thatched cottage in a London street. Recently, the British Travel Association's advertisements in some of the glossier American magazines have been publicising a little-known England: "scaled-down prices," they gaily inform the prospective traveller, "will all seem pleasantly in keeping with Britain's miniature villages, tiny fields and toy-like trains and automobiles." In one's glummer moments, the prospect of Britain commemorated by the cinema seems to have something in common with the picture this conjures up: so small, so resolutely old-world, so remote from the disturbing present.

The technical quality of the films of these years is not in question; simply through their choice of subjects, their reluctance to commit themselves to the contemporary and the actual, they were moving away from the hard-won realism of the war years. Exceptions have stood out sharply. *Genevieve*, a comedy smart, urban and inherently of its time, observed human relationships with an agreeable and unfamiliar toughness. And perhaps it was precisely the outrageous fidelity with which *Knave of Hearts* recorded a perceptive foreigner's view of a grey and grubby London that accounted for the note of affronted hospitality—the visitor pointing out that parts of the house were falling down—apparent in the reviews of this film. These are both comedies; a number of pictures have recently endeavoured more seriously to come to terms with the contemporary scene, and they will be considered later in this article.

## II

There remains, however, not merely the contrast between, say, the British and the Italian cinema—a British *Umberto*





"The Dam Busters." Barnes Wallis (Michael Redgrave, right) wades into the sea to recover fragments of bomb casing after an unsuccessful test. Centre, Richard Todd as Guy Gibson.

D. can scarcely be envisaged, and a decently-intended production on the subject of unhappy old age, *The End of the Road*, took refuge in facile and sentimental evasiveness—but the more direct contrast between this country and America. Here one confronts fundamental questions of national temperament. The contrast is between a fluid, open society with a tradition of rebellion against authority, and a stable, disciplined society in which respect for authority is so ingrained that to show, on the screen, a policeman accepting a bribe would probably seem to many people only a few degrees less shocking than directly to attack the institution of monarchy.

Drama requires conflict, and most of the more serious of current American films can be analysed in terms of the individual's rebellion against his environment or his attempt to dominate it. The archetypal heroic figure of this decade—and for young audiences in this country, in all likelihood, as much as for Americans—is Marlon Brando, the restless, semi-articulate rebel of *On the Waterfront* and *The Wild One*. In Britain, however, rebellion traditionally stops short at eccentricity. We do not, as John Wain commented in reviewing a recent book on English social distinctions, knock mounted policemen off their horses: "the average Englishman is incapable of such a gesture because he *believes* himself incapable of it." Noncon-

formity is another matter, but in England nonconformity has the disconcerting habit of becoming fashionable. That deep-rooted grudge against "the system" which turned so many American intellectuals of the 'thirties towards Communism, and currently towards a more generalised and insubstantial revolt, is no significant part of our intellectual climate.

American self-criticism has become a cliché. On the screen, at least, Americans are prepared to admit that public officials may be corrupt, that hooliganism presents a social problem, that army discipline perhaps encourages brutality, that the prison system could stand reformation, or that racial minorities find life difficult. These are issues that also make headlines in Britain, if for "racial minorities" one reads "West Indian immigrants." They are not contentions that anyone is likely to argue with; neither, though, is anyone in this country very likely to make a film about any of them. We do not hold that wrongs can be righted by loudly proclaiming their existence, nor that to do so serves any profitable purpose. We have not developed that confident journalistic technique which wins Oscars and Pulitzer Prizes by ferreting out corruption. We are not by temperament given to violence, which, when one comes down to it, is an ingredient in American life that goes some way towards explaining the vitality of the





Deborah Kerr in "The End of the Affair."

American screen. Tolerance and trust in compromise, the hallmarks of the English character, work against the "engaged" artist in any medium; so does that celebrated English custom of ignoring a disagreeable fact, on the assumption that if left alone it may quietly go away.

All this means that many areas of experience are closed off to the British film-maker. A no less significant issue, and one affecting the whole picture of life that we are given on the screen, is the intriguing and unmentionable subject of class. Social position, the varying rituals of snobbery, the manoeuvres by which privilege defends itself and the inroads made on its far from impregnable position, have long represented one of the great themes of English fiction, and notably of English comedy. American humour is a matter of personalities reacting against each other; English humour—the humour of Jane Austen, of Wilde, of the novels of Evelyn Waugh and Anthony Powell or the cartoons of Pont—depends ultimately on the finest shades of distinction between what is, and what is not, "done." But if the novel has as yet scarcely made contact with Orwell's "future England," the cinema, the more popular art, cannot for much longer ignore it.

For the film-maker, this is treacherous ground. Because of the infaceable stamp of accent, Celia Johnson brings an incongruous suggestion of the country vicarage to the Petticoat Lane of *A Kid for Two Farthings*. Because the British cinema took over almost wholesale from the theatre the whole sterile and outmoded "comic Cockney" tradition, we have hardly seen a picture of the ordinary Londoner that has escaped the artless infection of Huggettry. For the same reasons, an English comedy on the lines of *Antoine et Antoinette* or *The Marrying Kind* can scarcely, as these films do, simply accept its characters,

but must confront a barricade of class attitudes, barnacle-encrusted "working class humour," and all the rest of it. The barriers were raised a long time ago, and one of the problems for the English artist—the artist that is, who does not want to restrict himself to a world in any case over-narrow for the cinema—is that of coming face to face with his material. Perhaps it is partly in consequence of this that while films such as *Marty*, or *The Wild One* or *Violent Saturday* give one an almost remorselessly exact sense of location and setting, the placing of a character, the relation of an individual to his environment, is something in which the British feature film too often remains deficient.

### III

These are for the most part temperamental predispositions, and the film-maker must reckon with them. If, for the sake of argument, one imagines the possibility of a British *Bicycle Thieves* or *Nous Sommes Tous des Assassins*, or a *Gentleman's Agreement* or *Caine Mutiny*, can one calculate the possible reactions of the audience, presented with the issues raised in these films on, as it were, their home ground? There exist, however, other and more tangible problems for the film-maker with a taste for interpreting or criticising contemporary society.

Some months ago, the question of the projected film of Michael Croft's novel *Spare the Rod*, discussed at length in the correspondence columns of the *News Chronicle* and *The Spectator*, revealed to a somewhat surprised public one indirect effect of censorship. The film had to be abandoned because it would have received an "X" certificate, would in consequence have been shown in relatively few cinemas, and would therefore have failed to recoup its production costs. The Censor's comment, as quoted by Mr. Croft in a letter to the Press, was that, "an inefficiently run school and the moral deterioration of its teachers through their inability to control children are not subjects to be debated before children of school age." In this connection, Mr. Croft made two points that seem at least arguable: that there was a certain amount of "moral deterioration" in both *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and *The Belles of St. Trinians*, and that, while this was presumably allowable on the grounds that the schools were "fictional or farcical" it might still be assumed to have its effect on children; secondly, that "moral deterioration" of persons other than teachers, in "... scenes of domestic conflict, of the breaking up of family life, slick and nauseating images of violence," was by no means so assiduously kept from children.

At the same time, in a letter to the *News Chronicle*,



Interrogator and Cardinal: Jack Hawkins and Alec Guinness in "The Prisoner."





Returning home from a cattle drive, Howard (Dirk Bogarde) and Mary (Virginia McKenna) discover that her home has been ransacked by Mau-Mau raiders. "Simba."

Mr. Ted Willis mentioned a script dealing with prison conditions on which he had worked: "although the whole emphasis was on the honesty and integrity of the prison service . . . we showed one prison officer who was weak and took bribes." The Censor, he said, "refused even to consider it, in the following words: 'We could not allow in any film about prison conditions in this country a suggestion of corruption on the part of our prison officials. This would be an unmerited slur on the integrity of the prison officer service.'"

These, of course, are statements from interested parties. They indicate the nature of the problem. Another aspect of it was suggested in an article written by Jill Craigie for the *Sunday Express*, in which she claimed that, "it is almost impossible to criticise any British institution in a visual medium," because "to do so it is necessary to set up cameras on the organisation's property . . . permission for this is granted only when the script has been vetted." We learn, Miss Craigie commented, "that there is no red tape on the railways; that civil airplanes never crash; that there is no injustice in the armed services; rarely an accident in the mines. . . . The Home Office is touchy on the subject of prisons. None of these may be photographed even if there are no warders or prisoners in sight. The Colonial Office withheld facilities for a film about a left-wing Colonial governor. . . ."

*Autres pays, autres mœurs.* . . . Still, even if institutions were to open their doors to film-makers, the situation might not be radically affected. The streets, after all, are free, but it was left to a French director to put London authentically on the screen. Ealing Studios honourably excepted, there appears to be a general hesitancy in using locations unless there are picturesque landscapes to be exploited. Film-makers, it may be conjectured, are hampered by conservatism on the part of production and distribution organisations. There is a tendency to play safe in casting, so that half a dozen popular stars are over-worked (formerly Glynis Johns and Jean Simmons; currently Jack Hawkins, Dirk Bogarde and Peter Finch) while players for the moment less fashionable remain idle. Similarly, the type-casting of established and reliable character players

inhibits the search for new faces. (Incidentally, although *A Kid for Two Farthings* mustered a battalion of character actors, the most authentic impression was made by the unfamiliar, and in the context "right," personalities of Vera Day and Primo Carnera). And, taking an arbitrary assortment of a dozen recent pictures, selected for their range of subject matter, one finds that four (*The End of the Affair*, *A Kid for Two Farthings*, *Passage Home*, *The Ship that Died of Shame*) are adapted from novels; three (*The Prisoner*, *As Long As They're Happy*, *Carrington V.C.*) come from the stage; three (*The Colditz Story*, *Above Us The Waves*, *The Dam Busters*) have their origin in books dealing with war exploits; and only two (*The Constant Husband*, *Simba*) rely on original material.

These varied pressures—the nature of the English temperament itself, the attitude of authority, the reluctance to take chances on the part of those controlling production finance—undeniably affect the state of our cinema, making contact with many aspects of contemporary reality uncommonly difficult. The point at issue, however, remains. Anyone wanting a picture of what Britain was like during the war has only to look at the screen: *Fires Were Started* may reveal more than *Waterloo Road*, *Western Approaches* than *In Which We Serve*, but still the record stands. That British film-makers no longer find anything very stimulating in the contemporary scene, is perhaps attested by one sufficiently remarkable circumstance. Before his *A Kid for Two Farthings*, Carol Reed had not made a film with a contemporary British setting for six years; now he is again on the Continent, directing *Trapeze* for an American company. David Lean has followed up a period piece, *Hobson's Choice*, with *Summer Madness*, adapted from an American play and filmed in Italy with an international cast; Robert Hamer's most recent pictures, *Father Brown* and *To Paris With Love*, have respectively been set mainly and entirely in France; and Thorold Dickinson travelled to Israel to make *Hill 24 Does Not Answer*.

#### IV

It may appear, though, that the problem is not so much the search for a subject, as the more complex matter of the attitude taken to it. Documentary, the movement of the 'thirties, owed some of its vitality to its proselytising drive, to a conscious and determined didacticism: issues were raised on the screen not merely in their own right, but because it seemed necessary that people should be informed about them. Something of this sense of purpose carried the British cinema through the war years. Lacking a driving force of this kind, an impetus having its origin in the particular urgency of the times, the individual film-maker may easily become disengaged, almost to the point of detachment, from his material.

Two recent films, both decidedly above the average, perhaps suggest the lack of a final imaginative commitment on the part of their makers. Anthony Asquith's *The Young Lovers* sympathetically establishes the relationship of the American hero and the Iron Curtain heroine, trapped between opposing ideologies; then, as though unwilling to look directly at the issues raised, it sidesteps into the less controversial and less urgent territory of the thriller. *The Divided Heart*, essaying a subject that calls for a searching emotional honesty, is sincere and tactful. In its scrupulous sympathy with both sides—Yugoslav mother, German foster mother—in their battle for the son they both claim, in its anxiety to hurt no one, the film backs away from the essential anguish of its situation. But if these pictures show some reluctance to face their subjects squarely, they never exploit them. *Simba*, unhappily, does this. The intentions were no doubt honourable, but the attempts to dramatise the problems presented by Mau Mau (i.e. "tough" versus "tolerant" settlers) are so fumblingly handled that the film emerges only as a narrow and thick-

skinned piece of melodrama.

In one way or another, these films concern themselves with a crisis of conscience, in itself a sufficiently valid contemporary theme. Their subjects owe something to life; *The End of the Affair*, the most conscience-stricken British picture since *The Heart of the Matter*, deals in the currency of fiction. And these adaptations from Graham Greene occupy a rather singular place in a cinema not otherwise given to introspection or self-analysis. Greene is, as it were, our licensed pessimist, and the film versions of his novels represent the British cinema's nearest approach to the fashionable gloom of the *film noir*. Although *The End of the Affair* is slicked-up by its American director and screenwriter, and although the casting is none too happy (Deborah Kerr has a brave shot at the brutally difficult part of the wife; Van Johnson is very wide of the mark as the lover), the film undeniably communicates a mood, if only one of acute and corrosive melancholy. In Greene's novels the characters walk, with their eyes open, into traps laid by conscience; the novelist, having contrived the trap, seems relentlessly to wait for that moment when it clicks shut behind them. As a writer Greene has been notably influential, but these films cast no shadows, inspire no imitators. And this is scarcely to be regretted, since Greene's joyless world has its own uneasy artificiality.

The battle of conscience is again taken up in *The Prisoner*, a film which introduces a director from the stage, Peter Glenville, who displays unusual confidence both in controlling and exploiting his material; the director's hand is firm, the style fluent and decisive. Adapted from her own play by Bridget Boland, the film is set in an unnamed Iron Curtain country and concerns the efforts of "The Interrogator" (Jack Hawkins) to extract a confession of treason from "The Cardinal" (Alec Guinness). This reflects considerable courage on the part of the producers: psychological torture, even when applied by one immensely popular star to another, seems unlikely to make for good box-office. In Alec Guinness' steely suggestion of intellectual power held in reserve, in Jack Hawkins' strong if insufficiently subtle characterisation, in the initial confrontation and the first manoeuvres for position, the film imposes its atmosphere. What follows is anti-climax: when the Cardinal falters, when the Interrogator finds his weak point and applies pressure to it, the issues are resolved in the facile language of the psycho-analyst's case-book. The play's deficiencies in intellectual vigour, in concentration and austerity, are scarcely camouflaged by some effective *coups de théâtre*. Still, if the echoes of *Darkness at Noon* are somewhat muffled, this remains the sort of "off-beat" venture deserving of respect.

*The Prisoner* comes from the stage, and its limitations are those of the contemporary West End theatre, where the importations outnumber the home product, and the serious play is at a premium. The most distinguished British film of recent months looks back in subject to the war, in style to the documentary-influenced technique of those years. The current predominance of war films—*The Sea Shall Not Have Them*, *Above Us the Waves*, *The Colditz Story*—seems generally depressing in its implications, as an unacknowledged and presumably unconscious reversion on the part of film-makers to a type of subject with which they feel most at home. But *The Dam Busters*, working through the old-established tradition, honourably avoids the over-familiar clichés of characterisation and situation. As directed by Michael Anderson and scripted by R. C. Sheriff, the film has a clean, powerful drive, an impetus which carries it through the unhurried sequences of training and experiment up to the final tensely exciting attack on the Ruhr Dams. It is a compliment to the integrity of method that when Guy Gibson (Richard Todd) learns on the day of the raid that his dog has been run over, one

should be prepared to accept this not as a sentimental screen "gimmick," but as an actual happening. *The Dam Busters* is in no sense a poetic film, nor, in spite of Michael Redgrave's skilfully calculated performance as the back-room inventor, is it one in which character counts for a great deal. But this record of one of the great Air Force exploits, with its concern for factual accuracy, and its magnificent aerial sequences, also impresses through its consistent, unstressed regard for what the operation meant in human terms.

Michael Anderson is one of several young directors whose work shows considerable technical grasp without, as yet, anything very distinctive in the way of a personal style. They include two graduates from Group 3, Phil Leacock (*The Brave Don't Cry*, *The Kidnappers*) and Cyril Frankel (*Devil On Horseback*, *Make Me an Offer*), Guy Hamilton (*The Intruder*, *The Colditz Story*) and Lewis Gilbert (*The Good Die Young*, *The Sea Shall Not Have Them*). Paul Dickson, whose *David* and *The Undeclared* indicated a most sympathetic talent, has unhappily to date worked only on television films. Veterans in this company are Alexander Mackendrick, whose *Man in the White Suit* remains one of the few British screen satires worth remembering, and Henry Cornelius, who has enterprisingly followed up *Genevieve* with an adaptation of *I Am a Camera*. If there is any shortage of talent, it would appear to be among writers rather than directors, although William Rose has established himself as a lively comedy writer and Wolf Mankowitz's Jewish fantasies look like being in for a long run.

## V

The individual film-maker; though, can hardly be expected to strike out on his own. The pressures, as this article has attempted to indicate, can be formidable, and not least of them is that innate English suspicion of the artist who commits himself to a strongly-held point of view. The British fear of art is sufficiently celebrated: shut the artist up in his ivory tower and at least you know where you are with him. In these matters, it can fairly be assumed, the Censor speaks for the people. The blaze of indignation that followed the televising of *1984* (to be filmed, incidentally, in Britain but for an American company, as was Orwell's *Animal Farm*), the circumspection with which the uncensored B.B.C. goes about the business of commenting on contemporary society, suggest the power of the traditional tabus.

A nation, in fact, may be said to get the films it deserves, and if the range of territory covered by the British cinema is a somewhat narrow one, the responsibility does not rest wholly with the film-makers. For a quarter of a century, taste, skill and elegance have gone into the production of costume pictures, of literary adaptations, of the distinctive social comedies such as *On Approval* or *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. It is here that the British cinema has found its own sense of continuity. Otherwise, achievements exist in isolation: a director, such as Hitchcock, or a writer, such as T. E. B. Clarke, may establish himself, for a while create his own genre; a very few films—*Love On the Dole*, *The Stars Look Down*, the gallant failure *Chance of a Lifetime*—show film-makers prepared seriously to consider working class life; the documentary movement grew out of the depression, the years when the nation could no longer afford to ignore its industrial slums; and during the war, the cinema reflected the temper of a nation under pressure. Take the pressure off, however, and there is no substantial tradition of recording the contemporary scene to fall back upon, and a good many obstacles in the way. But the job of the cinema remains the imaginative investigation of reality: in this case, although the explorers may encounter some resistance, the opening up of the undiscovered country.





"The Woman in the Window."

# FRITZ LANG'S AMERICA

by Gavin Lambert

*Part One*

## Prologue : The Man Behind You

*"The First World War brought changes to the western world. In Europe, an entire generation of intellectuals embraced despair. . . . All over the world, young people engaged in the cultural fields, myself among them, made a fetish of tragedy. . . ."*—Fritz Lang.\*

Fritz Lang arrived in America in 1934, when he was forty-four years old. He came by way of France, where he had made, unexpectedly, his only comedy, an adaptation of Molnar's *Liliom*, about a man who goes to Heaven and has to review his whole life for the recording angel. (This rarely seen film is said to be full of charm and wit.) Lang's mood upon arrival in America, though, according to Henri Colpi, was "bitter and anguished"; no doubt the appalling visions of terror and outrage in his own *The Spy*, *Doctor Mabuse* and *M* still travelled with him. It was two years before he made his first Hollywood film, and it was not the one he originally planned to make; he spent his first year working on the scenario of a modern version of Jekyll and Hyde, *The Man Behind You*.

Lang's last German film, *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*,

\* "Happily Ever After," Penguin Film Review 5.





"The Spy": agents at bay.

had been banned by the Nazis. Curiously, however, he had at the same time been summoned by Goebbels and told that Hitler, apparently impressed by *Metropolis*, was prepared to offer him the directorship of the German film industry. Within a few hours, Lang was on his way to France. The ambivalence of the Nazis' attitude was not altogether surprising: did they, even, detect a similar ambivalence in Lang's own work? For what strikes one now about the classic German cinema is less the ferment of stylistic adventure in which it became embroiled than its pervading mood of disillusion, foreboding and violence. Whether treating history or contemporary life, fantasies of the unconscious or social drama, German directors committed an indifferent shrug in the direction of human destiny; even the realistic breakaway of Pabst and Dupont in the middle 20's was one of method only. A formidable, an inescapable *angst* penetrates the tens of thousands of strange and sombre images in the German cinema. In the first chapter of her study of *L'Ecran Démoniaque*, Lotte Eisner mentions the striking theory of Wilhelm Worringer ("sorte d'Oswald Spengler de l'histoire de l'art") who in 1907 diagnosed the nordic predisposition for abstract art as springing from a profound unease, an inability to reconcile the mysteries of the world's phenomena. Unable to resolve these mysteries into any consoling form, he abstracts them and makes them "absolute"; rather than penetrate the obsessive veil between himself and nature, he expresses his fear of what lies upon the

other side in varying forms and degrees of fantasy. From this point of view, the German cinema, the films of Dreyer and Sjostrom, the paintings of Kirchner, Klee and Marc, of Edward Munch and Karl Hill, the novels of Hoffmann, Kafka and Selma Lagerlof, the plays of Strindberg and Munk, share the same broad unease and project it in all kinds of disturbed masochistic visions. (Expressionism, Lotte Eisner comments *à propos* the German cinema, substitutes "vision" for "perception.") That a racial *angst* was exacerbated in Germany after World War I by the confusion and bitterness of defeat, and that German artists expressed it with almost claustrophobic intensity, Siegfried Kracauer saw when he came to analyse the films of the period in *From Caligari to Hitler*. His psycho-analytical approach yielded much; but it is Lotte Eisner's book that releases these films from the consulting-room couch and makes one realise how very relative in fact are the departures in styles, from the "pure" expressionism of *Caligari* to the "intimate" modern drama of the *kammerspiel* film such as *The Last Laugh*.

So, as one disinters the persisting figures from these films, the monstrous insatiable tyrants that appear in different forms in *Caligari*, *Nosferatu*, *Mabuse*, in *Jeanne Ney* (Khalibiev) and *Waxworks* (Ivan), the *femmes fatales* in Lang's early scenarios, in *Lulu*, *L'Atlantide*, *The Blue Angel*, or the creatures tormented by homicidal instincts in *Raskolnikov*, *Warning Shadows*, *Secrets of a Soul*, *M*, one sees that Lang's career in the classic German cinema,



embracing as it did most of its tendencies, serves in itself as a kind of allegory.\* In a variety of stylistic disguises the same obsessions appear and recur—in the *Nibelungen* saga, which added to expressionism an architectural solidity and massive fresco-like sweep, fatality of legend; in the contemporary melodramas, *The Spiders*, the two *Mabuse* films, *The Spy*, fatality of power and violence; in *M*, fatality of the sadistic inner self; in the early scripts for Joe May and Otto Rippert (*Plague in Florence*, *Woman with the Orchid*) and in *The Half-Caste* and *The Master of Love*, fatality of sexual domination; in *Metropolis*, fatality of the machine future. Lang had studied painting and architecture before coming to the cinema, and it is in his legendary and spectacle films, naturally, that a sensuous plastic quality is uppermost, but the images in his melodramas were no less assiduously composed. As in *Siegfried* he discovered the expressiveness of architectural form, so in *The Spy* and *Doctor Mabuse* he discovered the expressiveness of light and, of course, darkness. In these films he effectively created a language of screen melodrama as well as many of its myths. The sinister spiritualist séance, the exotic night club, the fake psychiatrist, the fight in the attic piled with bric-à-brac, the train smash, the chemical factory blown up by gasmasked attackers, the secret society meeting in a cellar beneath an abandoned building, the blind beggar who is not what he seems, the street battle between police and barricaded gangsters—all these are contained in the melodramas for which Lang created a richly formal, sometimes violent, visual texture to suggest a world of menace and terror. Shadows, mirrors and meaningful objects populate these images; the ball with which the murdered child in *M* had been playing bounces slowly away down the steps, banknotes with which Mabuse has been amusing himself in his asylum cell flutter in the air and torment him.

Behind the two *Mabuse* films, *The Spiders* and *The Spy* is the same idea of a demonic, almost abstract, power-organisation determined purposelessly to overthrow human society by acts of outrage and violence. The master-criminal of *The Spiders*, on the track of untold wealth buried in an Inca city, controls a terror-group and is bent on world domination; Dr. Mabuse, head of a gang of thugs and blind counterfeiters, and able to operate through hypnotism, commits wanton acts of outrage and destruction which eventually drive him insane, and in the second film is still at work from his asylum cell, hypnotising the director to continue acts which will throw mankind into an "abyss of terror"; in *The Spy* the crippled Haighi, master-agent, directs from a wheelchair (attended by a devoted nurse who is later revealed to be his mother) the activities of a vast espionage organisation whose activities bear no allegiance to cause or country and whose members meet and struggle for power with other agents on a similarly abstract plane. Finally, in *M*, the horrific life-and-death struggle is embodied in a single character, the child-murderer wretchedly trying to escape from his impulses and hallucinations.

These films are not only Lang's most original and lasting achievements of his German period, but remain the most haunting melodramas of the cinema. Their most obviously chilling feature is the suggestion of a cosmic terror at work behind society, a senselessly destructive presence capable at any moment of manifesting itself with an unspeakable outrage. The man in the dark suit and wide-brimmed hat is actually committed to one of these organisations, and his life is a desperate adventure of murder, betrayal, disguise and counter-disguise; the cause is an empty room with a loudspeaker behind a curtain or a dazed old creature slowly tearing up banknotes in a cell. Similarly, the tormented child-murderer who looks into a shop window and sees himself reflected in a maze of gleaming knives, never understands what has driven him to kill. "*I want to run away—I have to run away. I am always forced to move along streets, and someone is always behind me. It is I. I am myself behind me, and yet I cannot escape. . . .*"

# 1

Years later, in America, Lang wrote that the terror organisation of Mabuse was a symbol of Nazi power. "*Out of the Mabuses come the Heydrichs, the Himmlers. . . .*" Yet his wife Thea von Harbou—the marriage ended when he left Germany—who had written most of his scenarios after *The Spiders*, was already a member of the Nazi party when she worked on *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*. One can see why Goebbels banned it, but one guesses that the film's symbolism was still basically a projection of that *angst* which drove Lang first to conceive the idea of a power-organisation in *The Spiders*. But ten years later the dread monster had assumed a reality, the Nazis had risen to power and committed acts of terrorism in doing so. The attitude of the last film, though, is still the same. There is no moral force in these melodramas, only fascination and horror. In dramatic terms Lang made the menace of power vividly suggestive and disturbing (never more so than in the strange opening sequence of *The Testament*, with the deafening underground roar issuing mysteriously from the bowels of a deserted factory), but without pity for its victims or indignation against their aggressors. Less completely ruthless, in fact, the films would have been less startling as melodrama. It is only in *M*, when Lang concentrates on the individual so brilliantly portrayed by Peter Lorre, that a kind of steely intellectual compassion is evoked, through the actor's subtle facial play and his last grovelling confession of helplessness. But even here, perhaps, one is struck more by the fatality of instinct than the particular human predicament. From the beginning Lang's method was to abstract, to make "absolute." It was a method that, though

\* Expressionism and *kammerspiel* shared more than the same themes and figures. Carl Mayer's script for *Caligari* inaugurated expressionism in the German cinema, and his script for *The Last Laugh* inaugurated *kammerspiel*. Lang was originally to direct *Caligari*, but after suggesting certain revisions to the scenario turned instead to a sequel to his melodrama, *The Spiders*. The original idea for *The Last Laugh* was Lupu Pick's; after Mayer developed it they disagreed, and it was Murnau, hitherto an exponent of expressionist fantasy, who finally directed it. Similarly Lang's wife, Thea von Harbou, was scenarist for the *Nibelungen*, for *Metropolis*, for most of the contemporary melodramas, as well as for Murnau's *Nosferatu* and Dupont's *Variety*.

"M." Peter Lorre.





he modified its expressionist tendencies, he preserved in America; it is apparent in *Fury*, in *You Only Live Once*, in *Woman in the Window* and *Scarlet Street*; and, under the surface of something as characteristically American as *The Big Heat*, it is still there.

2

The trilogy of *Fury*, *You Only Live Once* and *You and Me* stands in a rather ambiguous relation to the American social cinema of the 30's. In one sense (disappointing though the third film is) they remain its most daringly conceived contribution; in another, they scarcely belong to it at all. The difference lies deeper than in the extreme harshness of temperament in the first two films; it is in what the films are about. *Fury* is not (like, say, *They Won't Forget*) about a lynching, but an almost abstract study of mob hysteria; this hysteria has a number of results, of which the attempted lynching is one and the ferocious destructive bitterness it arouses in the victim (who plays dead in order to bring his attackers to trial) is another. *You Only Live Once* and *You and Me* are not about the difficulties of ex-convicts going straight in American society—but, again, dramatic abstracts of society's indifference to the outcast, whom it creates, punishes and then forces back into crime so as to feel justified after all. In this sense the mood of *You Only Live Once* and *You and Me* is closer to that of their contemporary Carné-Prévert films, *Quai des Brumes* and *Le Jour se Lève*; not only are there elements common to both—the worker-hero rejected and penalised by society, the girl who identifies herself with his plight, their attempts to find happiness together frustrated by poverty and an inescapable past—but their structures are equally schematic.

Even *Fury*, superficially the most realistic of a progressively formalist trilogy, is conceived with an intellectual rigour quite uncharacteristic of the American "problem" picture. It is built round two long and brilliantly sustained setpieces: the mob-hysteria which begins with scandal-mongering and ends with attempted lynching, and the trial of the rabble which nearly collapses through the paid perjury of all witnesses concerned until a newsreel film shown in court reveals the line of pseudo-respectable citizens as rabid hooligans. Between these two events, a plot is sketched that does little more than introduce the victim and his girl and link them, strategically, to what is to come. We know and learn little about the characters themselves. Joe (Spencer Tracy) and Catherine (Sylvia Sydney) are saying good-bye as the film opens, she going to a new and better paid job in a western town, he staying on at a garage where he hopes to earn enough to come out and join her in a few months. This serves less to engage our human sympathies for Joe and Catherine as parted lovers than, first, to imply that society—by causing economic difficulties—is the guilty party from the start, and then, arising out of this, to prepare for the fatality that occurs later when Joe, on his overnight drive to rejoin Catherine, is arrested on a kidnapping charge. The parting itself is realised with an extraordinary and gripping subtlety to underline these intentions; its mood is not sad, but—from the first disturbing low-angle shot of the night express—menacing. Rain blurs the carriage window as Joe and Catherine say good-bye; when the train starts Joe reaches to press her hand for the last time but misses it, and a light reflection suddenly blots out her face behind the glass. Similarly, the other habits or incidents described—Joe's partiality for peanuts, the fact that he tears his coat—are not revealing of character but merely traits or accidents that will later support the circumstantial evidence against him. Only in the brief scene when Joe walks home after the train has gone and befriends a mongrel

dog—"You're lost and tired, like me"—is there an attempt to "place" him as an individual, and this is symbolic rather than human.

After Joe is arrested and put in jail, a series of sharp, ominous scenes describes the excitement of town gossips; these are types and symbols—imposing matriarchs, ugly self-important spinsters, a bumptious reporter in search of a good story, admiring raucous youths, a sycophant in a bar with a high falsetto laugh, a group of three burly men with one flicking a whip—and a shot of a farmyard full of gobbling poultry is dissolved in for overt comment. These vignettes merge into the fuller spectacle of the crowd assembling in the square outside the jail, at first restless and inarticulate, then impatient and hostile, and then, as night falls, succumbing to their orgy of hate. The observation here is systematically and inhumanly forceful. Lighting and camera-angles are masterfully planned, but they never—until the final paroxysm, when the mob-madness is caught in some huge close-ups of threatening faces with torchlight flickering across them—impose any kind of visual gloss on the material. Each shot is simply a vivid, exact, dramatic mirror for Lang's misanthropy. It is only after the fade-out on the fired jail that the justness, the calculation with which the whole episode has been shaped, becomes fully apparent. The development of a crowd mood slowly organising itself into a destructive rage from daylight to the cover of night: the transfixed horror of Joe watching behind the bars of his cell window: the unmoving figures of the sheriff and the police on the steps: the bewilderment of Catherine, who reaches the town after nightfall as the citizens are lighting firebrands, catches a distant glimpse of Joe at the window, sees a pattern of hideous faces, and faints. . . . Infallibly sure with this kind of dramatic architecture, Lang—having balanced and ordered the different viewpoints of crowd, law and prisoner—holds up the most terrible shock, Catherine's realisation, until the last moment.

The second setpiece is no less cogently handled, though once or twice (in his treatment of some of the pathetic, frightened, self-perjured witnesses), Lang's contempt allows him to slip over into caricature. Certainly no irony is spared. The sheriff, who has previously been shown pleading with the rioters to go home, is now one of the perjurers; like everyone else he is too afraid or corrupt to admit the truth and only wants the episode to be buried. (Mabuse knew that the law, no less than the individual, could be overcome at the moment of chaos.) The tension of the trial mounts with the same unforgiving objective drive, and its *dénouement*, the self-righteous citizens in the dock confronted with degraded images of themselves on the screen, seems less a dramatic twist than a kind of *q.e.d.* We knew these people had become these monsters; now they have to recognise it, too. Here the film's main purpose becomes clear; the exposure is complete, the circle fully travelled, and—after bribery has failed to keep the secret—the devil in (or the "Caligari within") these apparently law-abiding souls is proved and fixed for them. There seems an unmistakable allusion, in these violent torchlit images of the rabble, to the insensate, destructive urge to mass-power that has so often obsessed Lang. For a moment, on the screen, is another incarnation of the terror-group of Mabuse and *The Spy*, the world sabotage organisation of *The Spiders*.

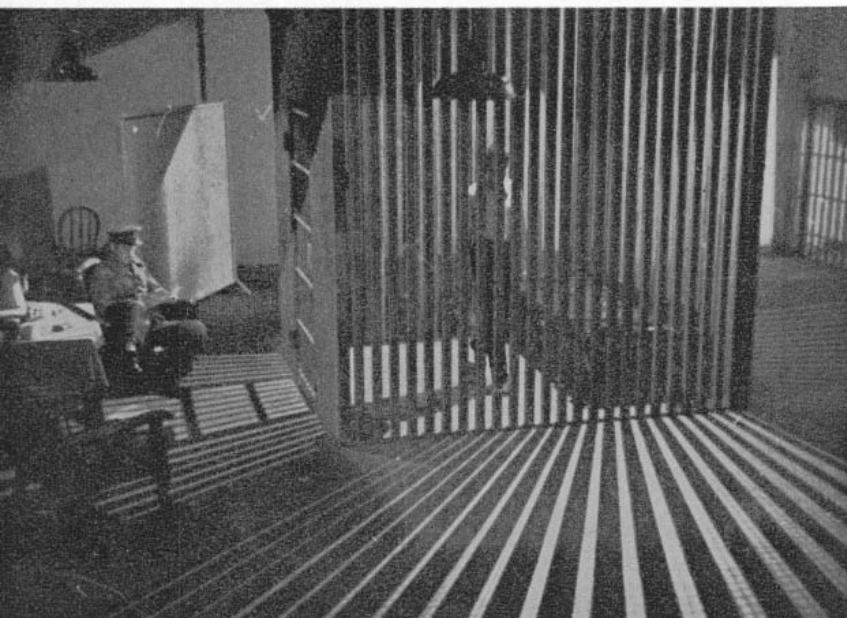
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*Opposite: Shots from the attempted lynch sequence in "Fury." The crowd assembling outside the jail: the sheriff and police on guard on the steps: Joe watching from his cell: one of the crowd throws a tomato at the sheriff.*









"You Only Live Once": the condemned cell.

At this point, perhaps, Lang's interest in the story began to slacken. The bridging passages reintroducing Joe—who, scarred and burned after his escape from the jail, decides to exploit his presumed death and persuades his brothers to launch the trial—continue the method of preconception. Joe's rage and bitterness is presented as a *fait accompli* to prepare for the next event; Lang doesn't expend sympathy on it, only heightens its immediate effect pictorially. Expressionist shadings appear from the moment Joe plans his revenge. As his brothers sit discussing him, thinking him dead, his shadow arrives between them like a ghost; the burned, unshaven figure is continually photographed in darkness; and as he listens to the trial on the radio, upright bars of an iron bedstead cast a pattern on the wall like a prison grill.

The resolution, after Catherine comes to plead with Joe to reveal himself and save the lives of his attackers, is the weakest part of the film. How much of this is due to Lang and the script (written by himself and Bartlett Cormack from a story by Norman Krasna) and how much to front-office pressure one cannot be certain. It is persuasively prepared for: the lonely walk round the town at night, the imagined faces of the lynchers reflected in a shop window, the strange moment of jazz music blaring from an all-night bar—but the bar is completely deserted, the radio plays to stacks of tables and chairs; the haunting pressure, the unease of atmosphere is brilliantly conveyed. Then the mood is broken by a crude transition to Joe's appearance in the courtroom next day, spruce and shaven and offering a short declamation on the need for a civilised community. The concluding image is the banal one of an embrace with Catherine.

3

In the next films there are again really only three characters: the outcast hero, his girl friend, society. *You Only Live Once* is an extremely sombre melodrama in which the indictment of society, though less direct, is equally bitter, and the outcome is wholly despairing. While Joe Wilson is presumably reconciled, and society will presumably allow him and Catherine to work in the same town in future, Eddie Taylor and his wife Joan are killed at the end of their desperate flight from the forces of order. This change of emphasis is implicit from the beginning,

both in a more direct fatality of dialogue and in the choice of Henry Fonda to play the wronged hero. Joe Wilson is a robust, extroverted character, and there is no self-pity in his disillusionment, his reaction is far from passive and he thinks at once of revenge; in Spencer Tracy's strong and candid performance, these qualities are underlined. Temperamentally, and physically, Fonda suggests the opposite, and Eddie Taylor is in fact troubled, anxious, introverted, driven to attempt escape from injustice and not revenge for it. This time society is accused by the spectacle of his confusion and desperation. It is guilty of no concerted vicious outburst, but a blind multiplicity of indifference and hard-heartedness that amounts, the film suggests, to an act of betrayal.

The construction is again schematic, and the drama proceeds through a series of deliberate ironic coincidences. (Lang has no script credit on this film, which was written by Gene Towne and Graham Baker; but, as in every notable American film he has made, its method is so characteristic that one feels certain he bears responsibility for the basic approach.) Released from his third jail sentence, Eddie Taylor determines, with the help of the girl who marries him, to go straight. He gets a job in a garage, but an unsympathetic boss soon fires him for something that was not his fault. This coincides with a demand for down-payment on a new house; and while he is wondering how to break the news to Joan, a bank is raided and a policeman killed by the gang with whom he formerly worked. Eddie is falsely incriminated, and Joan persuades him that his best way of clearing himself is not to run away but give himself up. He does so but is arrested and through circumstantial evidence found guilty and sentenced to death. The day before his execution he manages to break out; at the same moment the prison governor receives a telegram informing him that new evidence has cleared Eddie and he is pardoned. Eddie takes this as a trick, shoots his way out of prison, killing the priest who tries to restrain him, and is joined on the run by his wife. She gives birth to a baby before the couple are finally betrayed and shot.

Related this way, the events sound unacceptably fabricated. Yet it is this arbitrariness that gives to the film its curious and memorable force. Critics at the time reproached Lang with sacrificing valid social comment to melodrama; but they misunderstood, I believe, his purpose. From the opening scene of Eddie's release—asked if he'll go straight, "*I will, if they'll let me,*" he replies—a world of inexorable foreboding and melancholy is created,

"You Only Live Once." Sylvia Sidney, Henry Fonda.





a world of terrible *angst* in which guilt and innocence, calculation and fate, are confused. The imagery is continuously dark and concentrated. On the first night of their honeymoon at a guesthouse, Eddie and Joan walk beside a garden pool; frogs are croaking in the lilies, and there is a sudden ominous close-up of one of them. The proprietors have recognised Eddie as an ex-convict, and the couple are asked to leave. As they explore at dusk the empty house they are going to buy, the window-frames cast the same grill-like shadows on the wall that were used in *Fury*. The sequence of the bank robbery begins with a subtle assembly of atmospheric detail—rain streaming down, figures under umbrellas hurrying along the sidewalk, a crippled beggar near the entrance to the bank as a van draws up outside, and, across the road, the vague outline of a face watching from the back window of a car. The images evoke that feeling of anonymous terror preceding an act of atrocity that shivered through the melodramas of the 20's, that was imposed on the sequence of the train parting the lovers in *Fury*, that was to reappear in *Woman in the Window* as a thunderstorm erupts and lightning irradiates the hallway through which the professor is carrying the body, and, in *The Big Heat*, as Bannion tells a bedtime story to his daughter which is interrupted by the flash of the bomb exploding outside that kills his wife.

Here, as the exposition gives way to action—the gas-masked figure emerging from the car, the tear-gas attack—the reference to the world of *Doctor Mabuse* seems explicit; and from this moment the drama of *You Only Live Once* stays in a kind of doomed imaginary country of night, rain, penumbral mist and darkness. Eddie after his arrest and trial is like Joe after his escape: violent, desperate, unforgiving. But at first he has no plan, he sullenly rejects everything, including (in a brief scene memorable for its suppressed, despondent brutality) his wife. The prison sequences are as boldly formalised as anything in Lang's work, with their bareness, shadowed angularity, their bleak and heavy texture. An introductory shot of the tensions of waiting for execution shows a vista in which the screen is mazed with prison bars, real and shadowed, light striping a mass of empty floor in the foreground with them, the figure of Eddie pacing up and down his cell beyond. Throughout this suffocating sequence, the prescient counterpoint of faces, settings and objects reminds one of the *kammerspiel* tradition. To get to the isolation ward, where a gun has been hidden for him, Eddie surreptitiously slashes his wrists on a tin mug. We see the mug silently bending and tearing behind his back, the warder pouring his tea in the corridor outside, Eddie's own tense immobile features, then the drops of blood fall-

ing very deliberately, with an almost slow-motion effect, to the floor. Nor, when Eddie is rushed off for a transfusion, does Lang forego the situation's brutal irony. "Will it be necessary to postpone the execution?" the governor is asked. After consulting the doctor, who says that Eddie will be strong enough to walk on time, the governor says, "No. . . ."

At the climax of the breakout sequence, in which objects and sounds—searchlights sweeping through the night mist, machine-guns trained, sirens wailing—act like a kind of chorus, and after Eddie has shot the priest, we cut to his wife: imagining him now to have been executed, Joan slowly gets up from her chair, walks to the kitchen, turns on a tap, and in close-up water pours into a glass as she drops in the poison tablets. Then coincidence intervenes once more, and she is stopped by Eddie on the telephone. It is a remarkable achievement that tension of this kind, not swift or dynamic but portentous and grimly calculated, should be sustained right to the end of the film. (As in *Fury*, the last moments are marred by what one presumes to have been a front-office gaffe. Holding Joan's dead body in his arms, just before he himself dies, Eddie hears the priest's voice calling through the forest: "Eddie! You're free, Eddie—the gates are open!")

Lang brings it off by keeping rigidly to his schematic conception. While there is more human emphasis on Eddie and Joan than on Joe and Catherine, and while society is less a seen than a felt force, the method is similar. Eddie is an equally isolated, equally arbitrary protagonist; his human confusion lies in the expressive face and presence of Fonda, for there is no explanation of his criminal record, only the actor subtly communicates that Eddie's life has been a struggle to escape from a world unnatural to him. The linking passages are, again, strategic. Joan's sister, who would like Eddie to be executed, guilty or innocent, as a means of ending Joan's love for him; the self-righteous guesthouse couple, the unsympathetic garage owner, the governor's wife who believes that convicts will always be convicts—these are illustrations of attitudes designed to motivate the general theme. Even the episode of the old man who recognises Joan at a cigarette-machine at night and leads the police on the track of the car is handled to emphasise motive, not character. It is made succinctly clear by concentration on a poster rather than the old man himself that the \$10,000 reward and not moral scruples is what interests him. In *You Only Live Once* even more than in *Fury*, Lang's preoccupation with the values of "classic tragedy" and "prearranged fate" that he discussed in *Happily Ever After* and claimed to have finally rejected, seems especially meaningful.

(Continued on page 55)

Interview in prison: two close-ups. Henry Fonda, Sylvia Sidney in "You Only Live Once."





David Robinson

# SPECTACLE





THE spectacular element in the cinema is part of a much larger theatrical phenomenon. Aristotle, placing Spectacle last of the six elements he names in tragedy, neatly assessed its place in drama: "Fear and pity *can* be produced by spectacular means; but it is much better to produce them by the way you write your play." Nevertheless it has happened at various periods that the audience's demand for the spectacular has, for one reason or another, been unduly inflamed. Horace complained:

The curtain is kept down four hours or more,  
While horse and foot go hurrying o'er the floor,  
While crownless majesty is dragged in chains,  
Chariots succeed to chariots, wains to wains;  
While fleets of ships in long procession pass,  
And captive ivory follows captive brass . . .  
You'd think you heard the Gargan forest roar  
Or Tuscan billows break upon the shore,  
So loud the tumult waxes when they see  
The show, the pomp, the foreign finery.  
Soon as the actor, thus bedizened, stands  
In public view, clap go ten thousand hands.  
"What said he?" Nought. "Then what's the attraction?"  
Why,

Yon woollen mantle with the violet dye.

The invention and early years of the cinema coincided with the last manifestations of such a cycle in the theatre—a cycle which began with the staging reforms of Garrick, and was filled by the decline and ultimate sterility of the literary drama in the early nineteenth century. The causes of this decline were several. In the first place, the monopoly of the old Patent Theatres prohibited the performance of the legitimate drama in the minor theatres, whose number grew by 1840 to something like sixty within the Metropolis. These theatres were consequently restricted to musical entertainments or to spectacular pantomimic presentations. At the same time, the Patent Houses themselves had been made far too big when they were rebuilt early in the century; and the consequent difficulties of hearing or seeing any sort of intimate or naturalistic action caused them to concentrate, like the minor houses, on spectacular effects.

By the time the Theatres Act (1843) abolished the monopoly of the Patent Theatres, the damage was done; spectacle flourished; the fashion in dramatic entertainment which was to hold for the next half-century and be still further prolonged by moving pictures was established. The old fashionable audience left the theatres; of the new one Dickens wrote:

*There is a range of imagination in most of us, which no amount of steam-engines will satisfy; and which the great - exhibition - of - the - works - of - industry - of - all - nations itself will probably leave unappeased. . . . Joe Wheelks of the New Cut, Lambeth, is not much of a reader, has no very great store of books, no very commodious room to read in, no very decided inclination to read, and no power at all of presenting vividly before his mind's eye what he reads about. But put Joe in the gallery of the Victoria Theatre; show him doors and windows that will open and shut, and that people can get in and out of; tell him a story with these aids, and by the help of live men and women dressed up . . . and Joe will unravel a story through all its entanglements. . . .*

In the words italicised, Dickens has itemised the characteristics of the audience whose needs created what Nicolas Vardac, in his book *Stage to Screen*, has called the realistic-romantic theatre. The demand was for the extravagant, the remote, the sensational; but if this drama was to move (in whatever way these things do move), then it must be presented in a credible form. Consequently the nineteenth century was a period of remarkable develop-

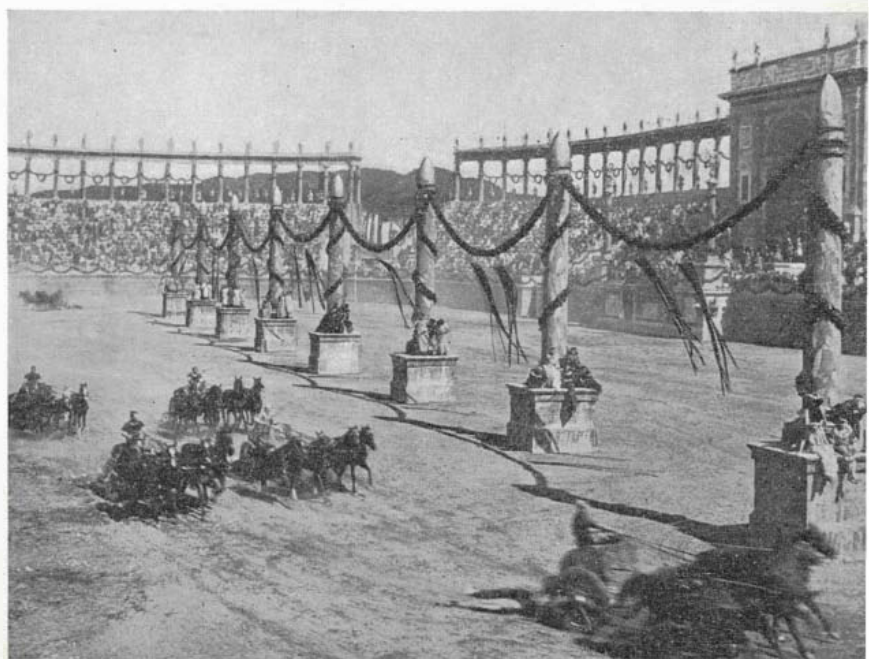
ment in the techniques of realistic staging. By the end of the century the popular drama had hardly changed in its themes; but the means of its presentation had developed vastly, from Louthenberg's work for Garrick, through Phelps and Kean, and finally to Irving's vast reconstructions at the Lyceum.

In America, however, where the English theatre and its movements had been largely transplanted in the early and mid-century with such actors as Vandenhoff, the Booths, the Barrymores and the Drews, the spectacle theatre achieved—in the work of Steele Mackaye and David Belasco—heights never equalled in this country. Mackaye especially showed an ability to conceive stage pictures on a scale only subsequently equalled by the film; and indeed photographs of some of his productions show that they were in fact in advance of any cinema products of the twenty years which followed his death in 1894. His staging of Buffalo Bill's Wild West show in *The Drama of Civilisation* was of a scope comparable to a *Cruze* or *Ince* Western epic. Had he been able to complete it, Mackaye's Spectatorium, designed for the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, might have survived as a sole monument to a century of staging whose shadow alone we can now know, in *Intolerance*.

## II

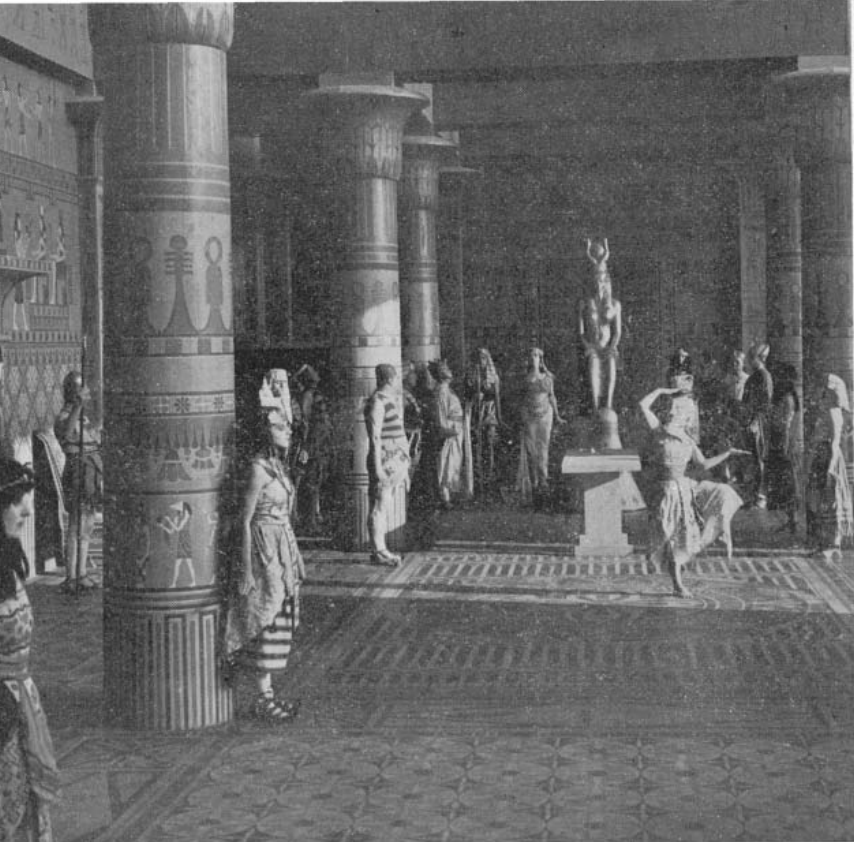
The film was born into the last years of that century; and when it first turned towards dramatic recreation, it borrowed inevitably from the existing theatre. The first sizeable dramatic production was *The Passion Play* of 1897. *The Passion Play* firmly launched the film industry into the cycle of film spectacles, each of which subsequently, by sheer expense and magnitude, acted on the unsettled industry like a flywheel; by its impetus thrusting the entire cinema forward into new developments. At the same time, *The Passion Play* is the first point at which we find the film, and the spectacle film in particular, inseparably linked with the realistic-romantic theatre.

Terry Ramsaye has told the full story of this film—how it was produced by Rich Hollaman as a rival to the Klaw and Erlanger film record of the Horitz *Passion Play*, after he had lost to them the exclusive rights to film this event. For his version, Hollaman unearthed the script and costumes of H. E. Abbey's production of Salmi Morse's *Passion Play* which had been announced for the New York season of 1880-81, but abandoned at the representation of various religious interests. (Belasco had successfully presented the play the previous year, in San Francisco.) The film, premiered in January, 1898, ran to the unprecedented length of 2,100 feet; and proved an amazing success. It established, long before Edwin Porter, the story film; it established the multi-reel film. Above all, it inaugurated the film spectacle.



Left: "The Queen of Sheba" (1921). Betty Blythe. "The costume is . . . a masterpiece of imaginative reconstruction." Right, the chariot race in Fred Niblo's "Ben Hur" (1926)





Its arrival must have been a little premature, however, for its success was not followed up until Kalem's ambitious one-reel *Ben Hur* (1907), by Frank Oakes Rose and Sidney Olcott—"positively the most superb moving picture spectacle ever made in America." Again the screen had turned to the spectacle theatre. Klaw and Erlanger first presented William Young's dramatisation of General Lew Wallace's best-seller *Ben Hur* in 1899, with William S. Hart as Messala. The remark of a contemporary critic was portentous:

In the play we see merely several horses galloping on a moving platform. They make no headway, and the moving scenery behind them does not delude the spectators. . . . The only way to secure the exact sense of action for this incident in a theatre is to represent it by Mr. Edison's invention. The management could hire Madison Square arena for a veritable chariot race and vitascope or vitagraph it. . . .

The 1907 film version had its career cut short when Kalem were sued, in the leading case on screen infringement of copyright; but it was followed by a fairly healthy succession

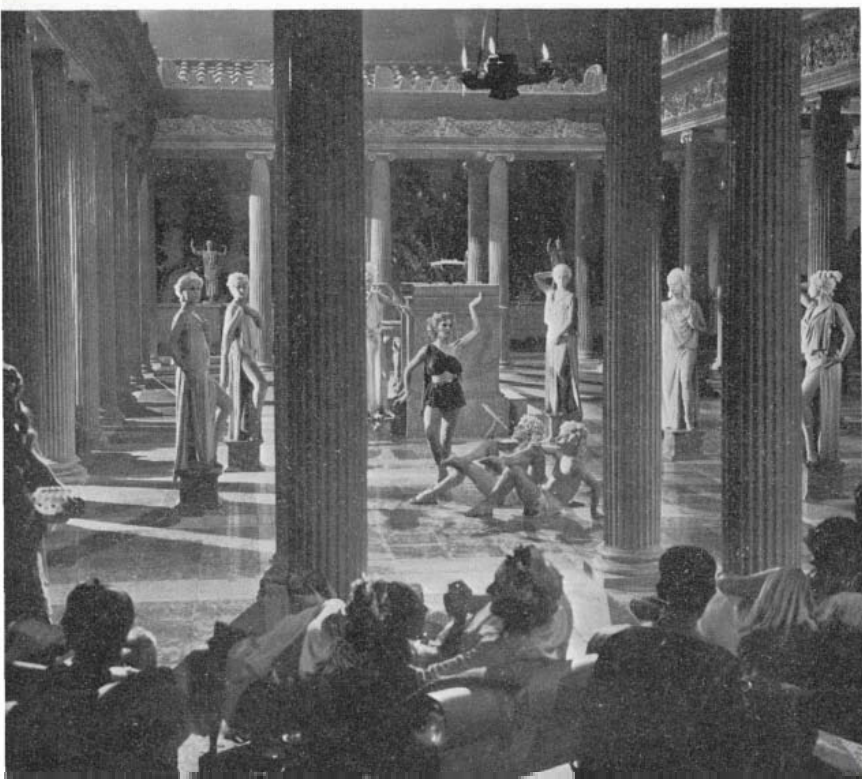
of historical and costume subjects. Inspired by the stage though they were, however, they still fell short of the ambitious stagings of the spectacle theatre. Evidently it still did not appear economic to invest so deeply in this ephemeral medium as in the live theatre.

The example for more ambitious stagings came from abroad, at first in French productions like the Pathé records of Bernhardt's *Camille* and *Queen Elizabeth*; subsequently in the costume and historical films with which the belated Italian cinema led off. In this genre, Italy had a number of special advantages. In the first place, her own theatrical traditions—altogether older and more respectable than the British and American realistic-romantic theatre—had always been distinguished by strong decorative qualities. These qualities reached their zenith in the decoration of Renaissance pageants and triumphs; but the baroque impulse survived much longer in Italy than elsewhere in Europe.

The tradition survived even through the nineteenth century—a period of academic dullness in Italian stage design—to provide the taste and ability for making cinematic spectacles. The means were ready, in the remarkable cheapness of labour in the years before the war, and in the proximity of actual settings and evidence of antiquity. But beyond this, we must recognise the presence at the head of the Italian industry of that day of men of culture and tradition—such as the Marchese Pacelli and Barone Fassini, at Cines, and the Marchese Patrizi at Tiber. These men were better able to bring to the cinema the fruits of an old national theatrical tradition, just because they were themselves descendants of the aristocracy in whose great houses this tradition was first born.

The first years of the Italian film industry were a mounting progression of successes in the field of spectacular production. The first triumph of Itala's *Ugolino* was quickly eclipsed by Cines' *The Three Musketeers*; and that as quickly by Ambrosio's first *Ultimi Giorni di Pompei* (the first Italian borrowing from the English-speaking spectacle stage)—the most sensational film of the epoch. The barriers to the American market were broken down by Pastrone's *The Fall of Troy* which, with its 800 extras, caused a sensation now difficult to appreciate. Apart from its outdoor settings, the staging falls short of Belasco's highest standard; the settings are patently two-dimensional; the "giant horse" a mere twelve feet high. Cines' *Quo Vadis?* found even easier entry to America, for once again its origins were the familiar spectacle stage. Adapted from the popular novel by Henry Sienkiewicz, the play had been first given in Chicago in 1899; in 1900 Wilson Barrett added it to his repertoire, and in succeeding years the play became familiar in dozens of productions and revivals. The film version—despite its eight reels—enjoyed a great success, not only in America and Britain (where it ran for weeks at the Albert Hall and was visited by George V and Queen Mary), but throughout the rest of Europe. Ambrosio countered with a series of two-reelers, and re-established his position in the industry with a second version of *Ultimi Giorni di Pompei*—which triumphed over two rival versions to appear as the unsurpassable zenith of the Italian spectacle.

For a time it seemed impossible to equal the accomplishment and success of this film. Subsequent spectacular productions met little success; Caserini's *Nero and Agrippina* was laughed off the screen in Paris. In 1913, however, Giovanni Pastrone presented his *Cabiria*—a work which completely altered the whole conception of film-making



Plus ça change . . . Above: "Messalina," Italy, 1924. Below: "Messalina," Italy, 1951.



and its economies; finally broke the conventions of the spectacle film away from the theatre; and emphatically restored Italian pre-eminence in this field. Whatever the truth of the film's paternity and d'Annunzio's association with it (in 1949 Pastrone suggested that it went little further than d'Annunzio's proposal at their first discussion: "How much will you pay to have my name on your film?"), *Cabiria* was a remarkable piece of film-making. Apart from its innumerable technical innovations, the mounting of the film was on a scale until that time unprecedented, and, indeed, rarely equalled since. Pastrone would use no perspectives or *trompe-l'oeil*. Everything was full-scale and three-dimensional—the palaces with their vast glass-covered floors, the gigantic temple of Moloch and the Festival of Fire. The film cost over a quarter of a million lire; twenty thousand metres of stock were exposed; the finished version ran for four hours.

### III

Meanwhile, after six years of experiment in the cinema, D. W. Griffith had turned to the film spectacle. By training an actor, in the realistic-romantic school, most of his early experience was with James Hackett, who had made a fortune out of his huge production of *The Walls of Jericho*. To the end Griffith's films betray these origins; and many were directly adapted from stage successes. His first costume spectacle, *Judith of Bethulia*, was adapted from a stage melodrama (by T. B. Aldrich, Daly's, 1903);

but Griffith's screen treatment—with a thousand extras, three hundred horsemen and a complete replica of the ancient city of Bethulia—seems to have shown already a complete recognition of the difference between the two techniques. Either Griffith had understood how completely the film could break away from the stage, or else he had seen the Mecca of the spectacle theatre. It is significant that he was known at this time as the Belasco of the Screen.

*Birth of a Nation* was again adapted from a melodrama—Thomas Dixon's *The Clansman* (Novelty, 1906)—whose reception presaged the decline of the spectacle stage: "Doubtless," wrote one critic, "there are features in *The Clansman*—spectacular and other—which may appeal rather forcibly to the lovers of crude melodrama. . . ." If *Judith of Bethulia* showed distinct traces of its own and Griffith's stage origins, *The Birth of a Nation* proved Griffith's complete allegiance to the film medium. It is needless to detail again its thorough realisation of film technique, which finally and for ever released the screen from the stage; and in the same act achieved the goal of Belasco and Mackaye.

Griffith resented the suggestion that his work was influenced by the example of the Italian films, and went so far as to deny having seen any of them. But the simultaneous perfection of the ideals of the spectacle stage, and the liberation of the film from it, seems not to have been wholly accomplished without the influence of the



"Manslaughter" (1922). An early example of the de Mille signature.





"Samson and Delilah," made by Alexander Korda in Hungary, 1924.

Italian film. It is certainly improbable that *Intolerance* could have been accomplished at that particular time without the parallel example. We can even lend a more sympathetic ear to Pastrone's hints about spies in his studios; and about the copy of *Cabiria* which was stolen in the States, and later fell into the hands of a Certain Someone in Hollywood. . . .

*Intolerance* remains the greatest spectacle film. Its cost was estimated at \$1,900,000; payrolls reached \$12,000 a day. It has been estimated that a complete re-make today would cost upwards of \$30,000,000. The Babylonian scenes, the luxurious cornucopian splendour of Belshazzar's Hall and the breath-taking shot in which the camera tilts upwards to take in the entire scene, have never been surpassed.

"The influences of the glorification of dimensions in *Intolerance*," wrote Terry Ramsaye, "have been discernible in screen spectacles ever since, down to *The Ten Commandments* and *Ben Hur*." And beyond. After *Intolerance* the spectacular scale of staging became for a time the commonplace (as we can see in Fairbanks', von Stroheim's, even thrifty Chaplin's films), helping to establish the legend of Hollywood that was created in the 'twenties and early 'thirties. But together, *Cabiria* and *Intolerance* marked the apogee of the spectacle film. Economically it has never been possible to equal them, and the subsequent history of spectacle is one of inevitable decline.

#### IV

The first real link between the American spectacle stage and the Italian film was when Ambrosio filmed the Belasco spectacle *Du Barry*, with the original cast, led by Mrs. Leslie Carter. After the war, however, the paths of American and Italian spectacle ran closer than before, to the ultimate detriment of the Italian cinema, which had lost its lead when post-war economics took away the original advantage of cheap labour, and imposed the new difficulties of scarce and expensive materials. Ambrosio's attempt to gain ground with yet another version of his old success *Quo Vadis?*, starring Jannings, failed dismally, and the final blow of foreign competition came with the *Ben Hur* fiasco. Following a pattern which has since been repeated, M-G-M financed a new version of *Ben Hur*, to be made in Italy, and which it was hopefully expected would re-establish the pre-war prosperity of the Italian studios. After a few weeks, however, the company was recalled to America, stars and director were replaced, and "every foot of film that had been shot in Italy was dis-

Storming the battlements. Pastrone's "*The Fall of Troy*" (1910), which internationally established the Italian spectacle film.

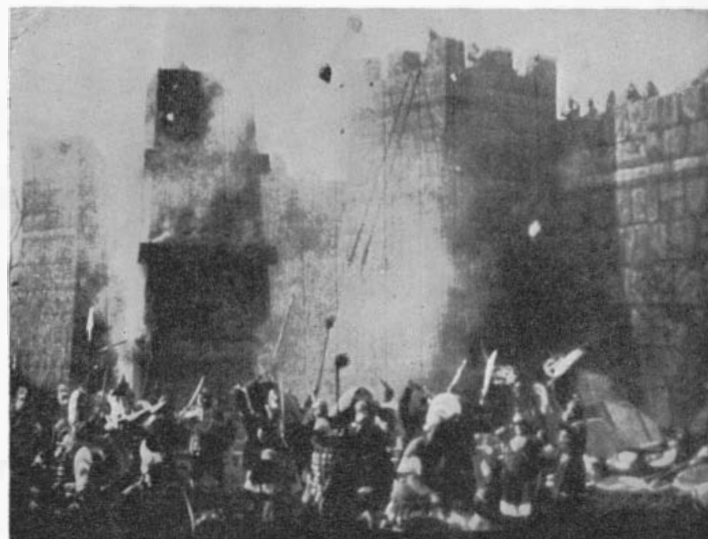
carded and the film was entirely remade in America." The reason for this retreat was the alarmed discovery that production in Italy was not—as had been thought—cheaper than at home. It proved to be a disastrous blow for the Italian film industry, to lose at once American confidence and money.

Since then the Italian film industry has seen many changes; but there have been recurrent attempts to return to the old glories of spectacular production, of which the most notable have been Gallone's 1928 production of *Ultimi Giorni di Pompei* and his *Scipione d'Africano*. The lesson of their restricted success has never been taken; and even at this moment we are at a tide of Italian spectacle production, most of which passes as little noted as newsreels. The latest and biggest, *Ulysses*, in which Italian and American talents are again combined, proves to be a pinch-penny example of the *genre*, despite the traditional flamboyant publicity.

In America, however, the spectacle film as Griffith first conceived it grew and remained a legend. In the year *Intolerance* was released, Cecil B. de Mille made his first large-scale historical film—*Joan the Woman*. With de Mille we are again solidly rooted in the nineteenth-century spectacle stage. His father, Henry C. de Mille, a dramatist, was one of Belasco's collaborators, and de Mille himself appeared as an actor in Belasco's spectacular productions. Among de Mille's early films were many taken from Belasco's stage successes; and his screen narrative style has never lost a certain woodenness which betrays his stage training.

De Mille's outstanding gift was an ability to anticipate the tastes of the public. The first of his religious spectacles, *The Ten Commandments*, was a deliberate and smartly timed reaction against the amorality of the school of "etiquette" films which he had himself inaugurated. The religion of *The Ten Commandments* was still "significantly couched in sex and display," for, as de Mille himself declared: "Your poor person wants to see wealth, colourful, interesting, exotic." *The King of Kings* (1927) shows de Mille somewhat restrained; but *The Sign of the Cross* (1935) is his most typical and best-remembered film. Here again de Mille had turned back to the old realistic-romantic theatre, to Wilson Barrett's perennial success of the eighteen-nineties.

Since then de Mille has continued to produce spectacles—*The Crusades*, *Samson and Delilah*—which have found audiences diminished and increasingly less appreciative. It appears as if time has at last passed him by for, with the age of the spectacle film long past, he is at work on





a remake of *The Ten Commandments*. "Mr. de Mille," reports *The Times*, "feels that he is about to create his masterpiece."

## V

The film spectacles of Italy and America represent the main streams of the *genre*. To a large extent the spectacular productions of other nationalities were subsidiary to them; no other country ever enjoyed for long the economic affluence which made possible continuing production of film spectacles. A handful of foreign productions enjoy an independent character and an independent interest—*Siegfried*, for example, and *Moon of Israel* (after this film Michael Curtiz quickly moved to America, where he has shown his continuing allegiance in *The Egyptian*). Abel Gance, with his superior artistry and his inexhaustibly original showmanship, represents an entirely personal conception of the *genre*. His work sometimes shows a rather nice line in sadism, which he indulged extravagantly in the commercial *Lucrece Borgia*. Alexander Korda too at the beginning of his career seemed destined to become an inventive maker of spectacle films. *Samson and Delilah*, made in Hungary, appears to have been particularly original in its conception and design; but *The Private Life of Helen of Troy* (made for First National in 1927) was not a success. He might well have begun spectacle production in this country, but for the economics of the industry here. As it was, "*The Private Life of Henry VIII* . . . launched a new wave of historical films conceived not as vast decorative frescoes but in intimate and even ironic vein."

## VI

The true film spectacle, of any nationality, has always been distinguished by a characteristic blend of elements—elements largely derived from the spectacle stage. The first of these is, of course, costume and décor. With the exception of the film musical—a special subdivision of the kind—and such strange excursions as the Russian interplanetary *Aelita*, the setting of film spectacles has mostly been historical; and the old conflict of realistic and creative schools of design has always obtained. Generally, accuracy and scholarship has been the especial pride of spectacle makers. Pastrone spent months in the Carthaginian department of the Louvre, doing research for *Cabiria*; Griffith advertised his scholarship in prissy little footnotes on the titles; de Mille is proud to boast an expenditure of "thousands of dollars to make certain our reproduction is historically accurate." Yet no producer has ever overcome the eternal difficulty of costuming actresses:

Female costume on the stage, of course, has always been subject to the variations of the current mode. . . . In our own day similar absurdities only too often prevail, especially in films, and they are hidden from us by the difficulty that most people feel in abstracting themselves sufficiently from their own contemporary convention. (James Laver, *Drama, Its Costume and Décor*.)

Even beyond this, however, there has always been scope for creative reconstruction. From early days we have the example of J. Gordon Edwards' *The Queen of Sheba*, as

(continued on page 55)

Vesuvius erupts. Ernest Shoedsack's "Last Days of Pompeii," U.S.A., 1935.





ROBERT HAWKINS



# People at

*Above, left: Two members of the Japanese delegation. Above, right: Marcel Achard and Anatole Litvak, members of the jury. Right: Thorold Dickinson (left) and Haya Hararit (centre), director and star of "Hill 24 Does Not Answer" besieged after the showing. Miss Hararit received a special mention for her performance.*







# Cannes

ROBERT HAWKINS



*Above, left: Betsy Blair, star of "Marty," the Grand Prix winner. Both the leading players were specially complimented for this film. Above, right: Melina Mercori and Georges Foundas, the stars of Michael Yannis' Greek film, "Stella." Right: Gina Lollobrigida on arrival.*





Marlon Brando in "The Wild One."

## Film Reviews

### THE WILD ONE

The preoccupation with violence in American films is something of which, by now, practically no one is unaware; the censor cuts, the censor bans, *New Statesman*-like parallels with the horror comics are drawn, *Time* magazine quotes a warning by Mr. A. L. Watkins ("Anyone who prolongs scenes of violence is only doing so to titillate a small unhealthy section of the audience") and reminds its readers of official British broad-mindedness about sex—husbands and wives may now be shown together in bed. The problem, however, is nearly always

discussed in terms of symptoms rather than cause. The meaning of violence, the emotional states that lead to its expression, tend to be ignored; and—wearied, no doubt, by the amount that is undeniably no more than degrading titillation—the point is approached at which its mere presence is assumed, automatically, to be deplorable. (Compare the recent confusion in some prosecutions against publishers, in which obviously obscene books and serious "frank" novels were equally penalised.)

This seems especially relevant to *The Wild One* (Columbia), a film based on an actual event of a few years ago and one of the few serious American studies of the subject of violence. It is neither immoral nor gross, yet has been banned by the censor and many local authorities, presumably because its acute descriptions of rowdiness may excite adolescents, who will also be encouraged, no doubt, by the weakness of the police in this particular incident. Have we, then, arrived at a principle whereby a film containing elements potentially harmful to a small criminally-minded minority must on that account not be seen by the (presumably law-abiding) majority? If so, where do we draw the line? For the moment, it seems, at certain points of physical brutality and sexual behaviour, for many other human irregularities, such as robbery in various forms, may be presented in extreme detail. Now, no one suggests that violence and all



kinds of extra-marital relations do not exist; on the contrary, they are two of the most persistent factors in contemporary life, and the fact that both films and censors should be preoccupied with them is not surprising. But while they are often presented in a corrupt and debased way, it must also be recognised that a serious film about them may, in a different sense, be unpleasant or uncomfortable. *The Wild One* is a case in point.

Though its subject is essentially violent, the treatment of this film has an unusual sobriety; it is one of the rare films, in fact, in which violence is shown to have any meaning beyond a compulsive outburst of frustration or anger. The first forty minutes, which are by far the best, vividly describe the suppressed and uneasy futility of the lives of the "Black Rebels", the motor-cycle club boys who, under their leader Johnny, ride into the small town in search of excitement or adventure. A series of brilliantly pointed sketches establishes the rhythm of their actions and moods, suggesting the aimless uncertainty that lies beneath the surface boasting and toughness of Johnny, the extraordinary and frightening vacuum of the world of his gang with their evocative nicknames: Crazy, Go-Go, Mouse, Pigeon. Before they ride into the town, one of the gang steals a statuette from the prize table at a motor-cycle race meeting, and presents it to Johnny; proudly he fixes it to his machine. In the local bar, he starts talking to Kathie, a young waitress, and is soon baffled and fascinated by his failure to impress her. When a rival gang arrives, the two leaders, encouraged by their followers, work themselves up into a meaningless, unnecessary fight. Later in the evening, as the juke-box continually plays and the glasses are continually refilled, they dance and shout and threaten, smash a few bottles, break into a hairdressing saloon and come out into the street with driers over their heads, get on their bikes, ride round, chase Kathie. . . . The destruction, the violence, is in fact inconsiderable, but the film draws its strength precisely from this. The unease, the unresolved tension, the feeling that at any moment a more outrageous act may be committed, are powerfully conveyed by the images, the jazz rhythms of the music, the incisive yet unhurried pace, and the sullen, almost capricious force of Marlon Brando's characterisation. With its disturbingly rebellious undertones, its inarticulate, alternately withdrawn and truculent moods, its subtle suggestion of complexity behind simple actions, this is his most impressive and accurately controlled performance since *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

It is at the point at which the actions of these discontented, sensation-seeking, voluntary outcasts explode into real violence that the film itself loses momentum: not through physical insistence, but because, on the contrary, by trying to explore all the motivating factors too quickly and sketchily it loses its central drive. The local police officer (who is also Kathie's father) is frightened and vacillating, and his weakness plays into the hands of a group of townspeople who—under the mistaken impression that Johnny has tried to rape Kathie—viciously beat him up. Thus violence, the film suggests, breeds violence. Parallel with this is the story of Johnny and Kathie; he at first angered and then alarmed by her innocence, she attracted to him against her will, both of them affected more than they want to admit by the force of circumstances. And finally, the only death is an accidental one—riding away from his pursuers, Johnny is knocked off his machine, which runs out of control and kills a passer-by.

All these points are, in themselves, valid; but although they reflect the conscientiousness of writer (John Paxton) and director (Laslo Benedek) in approaching the situation from the widest point of view, they have not been dramatically assimilated into the structure of the film, and give one the feeling of a narrative going off at a series of tangents rather than incorporating, as it moves forward, a series of different stresses. The scene between Kathie and Johnny that begins with the moonlight ride on his motor-bicycle is shrewdly written and beautifully directed, but it is only the beginning of something which is not worked out, and the end—Johnny's silent return to the bar, leaving the stolen statuette on the counter—appears, in its context, too inconclusive. Again, the episode with the enraged townspeople, and the accident and its consequences, are too laboriously contrived, take up too much time, with the result that the gang as an entity seems to disappear halfway through the film. And it is the gang, after all, which is the film's

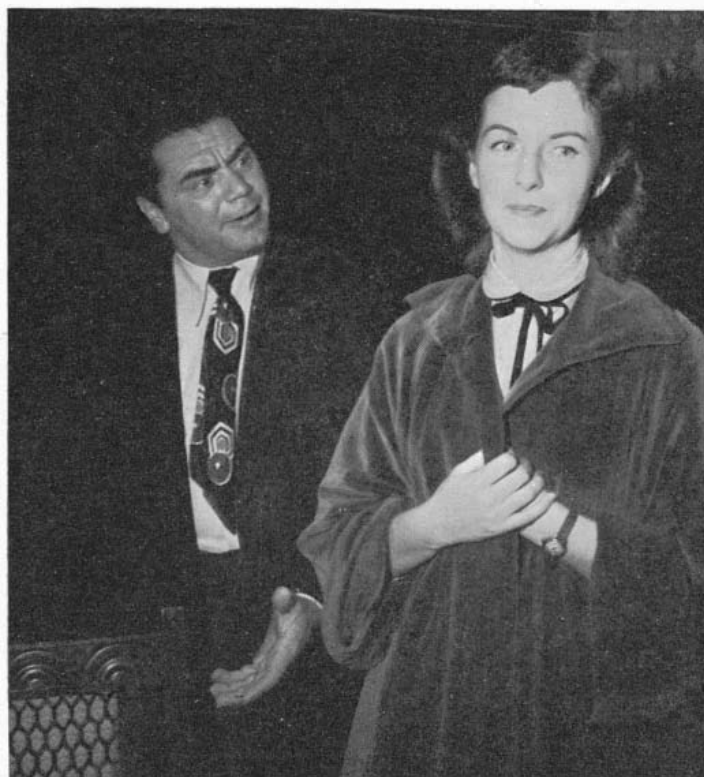
subject. Of course it is true that, in such an atmosphere, the tension on both sides can result in a catastrophe for which neither is responsible, but as the film presents this it is too "planted", and thereby loses the shock-effect which would make it dramatically true.

The fact that neither Johnny nor the gang are directly responsible for the accident, and that they get off with no more than a caution, has been held by some as proof of the film's "immorality". This seems to me a misconception, arising perhaps because *The Wild One* is immediately powerful in its dispassionate observation of the undercurrents and hints of violence, while the dramatic impact of the second half, which contains its "judgment", is weak and sometimes blurred—and consequently the actions, not the motives, create the strongest impression. All the same, this impression is penetrating. The presentation of the "Black Rebels", for all its apparently non-committal, documentary style, has a moral force, and it is this feeling of emotional conflicts working themselves out in pointless and destructive bravado that gives the film its uniquely disturbing flavour. *The Wild One* is never less than a serious work, and on this account alone deserves to be seen; and its good things confirm the impression from *Death of a Salesman* that in Laslo Benedek the American cinema has an unusual talent, with a solidity and a spirit of humane inquiry which gives this film, in its faults as well as its virtues, a genuine and independent quality.

GAVIN LAMBERT.

## MARTY

The television writer, the playwright who thinks in terms of the small screen and its potentialities, is still a comparative newcomer. Not the least interesting aspect of *Marty* (United Artists), the outsider which walked away with the Grand Prix at the Cannes Festival, is its suggestion of what this type of writer may be able to bring to the cinema, as well as to his chosen medium, at a time when Hollywood's pursuit of the outsize and the ornate seems to carry it steadily further away from the human personality. Paddy Chayefsky, who acted as associate producer on *Marty* and adapted his own television original for the screen, has described his intentions in writing the play: to catch the characters "in an untouched moment of life"; to write the dialogue "as if it had been wire-tapped"; to explore that "world of the mundane, the ordinary and the untheatrical" which, he argues, should be television's particular province. Marty, his commonplace hero, belongs to the Italian-



"Marty" Ernest Borgnine, Betsy Blair.





Julie Harris and James Dean in "East of Eden."

American district of the Bronx; he works in a butcher's shop, is a little ashamed of his job, and has been made painfully aware by a series of rebuffs and disappointments of his own lack of polish and good looks. At a dance hall, he takes pity on a girl as plain, lonely and unconfident as himself. Afraid that his friends will laugh at his unprepossessing choice, he hesitates, unwilling to acknowledge his own feelings, before admitting to them, and to himself, that he is in love.

The film's emphasis is on loneliness in the city: the bored aimlessness of the young men hanging about the bars and street corners, the unhappiness of the widow whose children no longer need her, the fear that attacks Marty's mother when she realises what his marriage may mean in terms of her own life, and the despairing anxiety for affection that brings Marty and the girl together. The writing accurately catches the tone of everyday life, with its hesitations and uncertainties, its moments of involuntary drama and unexpected emotion. The sharp and detailed script, though, has none of that artless, improvised quality which Chayefsky's statement of his own purposes might suggest. Intermittently, the dialogue recalls that of Saroyan in a play such as *The Time of Your Life*: there is the same sense of characters thinking aloud, cut off from each other by their own preoccupations, so that human communication appears in itself a sufficiently difficult and chancy business. There is nothing casual about this kind of writing; and the contrast between the validity of the scene in which Marty's friends knowledgeably discuss the novels of Mickey Spillane, and the snatch of overheard dialogue between two women in a bar, which has the air of a deliberate piece of writing for effect, indicates the care with which the "wire-tapper" must organise and discipline his material.

Marty, in detail a study of life in the Bronx, is in essence a contemporary love story, a romantic encounter developed with charm, humour and emotional penetration. Ernest Borgnine, breaking away from the succession of thug parts which began with his chillingly brutal stockade sergeant in *From Here to Eternity*, plays Marty with an expansiveness and warmth of feeling which underline his vulnerability; it is precisely in his kindly good humour, his capacity for friendship, that Marty is open to attack. Betsy Blair, an actress seen too infrequently on the screen, has perhaps the more complex part: withdrawn, tense, afraid of life and in retreat from it, the girl might well appear altogether too forlorn and woe-begone. But the performance has an integrity which invites sympathy while avoiding the easy appeal for pity. Marty's character is built up, as it were, in clear statements, the girl's in asides; it is this quality of hesitant, inarticulate tenderness that Betsy Blair's playing notably conveys.

The director, Delbert Mann, staged the play first on television, and his treatment reflects a closely sympathetic response to the author's intentions. The close-up technique, the adroit balancing of major and minor parts, the unstressed authenticity of the backgrounds, of the city streets at night, the neighbourhood bars and cafés, the crowded Saturday night dance hall, all work towards the film's particular atmosphere of intimate observation. If the direction can be faulted, it is in the

generally rather cautious and tentative approach to the resources of the larger screen. *Marty*, though, remains primarily a writer's film, and one in which an "offbeat" theme has been compromised by none of the familiar concessions; the Hecht-Lancaster production team are to be congratulated on this unusual state of affairs.

PENELOPE HOUSTON.

## LIANG SHAN-PO AND CHU YING-TAI

Only a small number of the films made in China since the Communist revolution have been seen in this country, and these only at private viewings and film societies. Some have dealt with the war with Japan and others with contemporary problems; the first Chinese feature film in colour to be publicly shown in London, however, looks back into the past and is based on a classical Chinese legend. The story of *Liang Shan-Po and Chu Ying-Tai* (Gala, directed by Sang Hu and Huang Sha) is of the utmost simplicity. The beautiful Chu Ying-Tai persuades her father, a wealthy merchant, to allow her to attend school in Hangchow, and knowing that only boys are admitted, she successfully disguises herself as a male student. She meets and falls in love with Liang Shan-Po, another young scholar. Shan-Po discovers her true identity and, visiting her home to claim her as his bride, is stricken with grief when Ying-Tai tells him her father has betrothed her to another. Shan-Po pines away and dies; Ying-Tai, equally heartbroken, throws herself on his tomb, which miraculously opens and encloses the two lovers for ever. The film ends with a beautiful, short symbolic dance, showing the hero and heroine metamorphosed into two gaily-coloured butterflies.

Based on a popular opera *genre* of fairly recent origin, the original piece won a number of prizes when presented theatrically at a Festival of Opera held in Peking during 1952. The film version, produced later by the Shanghai Studios, preserves the theatrical framework and is performed by an entirely female cast taken from the Shaohsing Experimental Opera Theatre. The narrative consists of spoken dialogue, together with solo songs, concerted numbers and brief, linking choral passages sung off-screen. Although the visual beauty of the film is in itself impressive, it seems likely that the music (composed by Liu Ju-Tseng) and the playing will make the strongest impact on a responsive Western audience. The entire cast (with its assured male impersonators) admirably maintains the stylised conventions of the work, and highly dramatic effects are obtained through the accompaniment, with its high flutes and sudden outbursts of violent, percussive sound. The long scene towards the end where Shan-Po realises that Ying-Tai can never marry him is remarkable for its expression of intense, personal grief and communicates a marvellous feeling of passion and tenderness. Here, as elsewhere, the use of gesture and stylised body movements is of the greatest delicacy and interest. A feature of the richly ornamented costumes is the long sleeves worn by the main characters; the manipulation of these sleeves, and the accompanying hand movements, possess extraordinary grace and dexterity. Apart from a few brief, exterior shots, the decor is deliberately theatrical in style, sketching in the backgrounds with an artless simplicity. The film's direction is also unostentatious in the extreme: the camera set-ups are straightforward, individual takes are often quite long and nothing is allowed to come in the way of the performers. The colour system used (presumably a form of Agfacolor) is generally pleasing, though it does not match the sophistication and softness of the Eastman Colour in the Japanese *Gate of Hell*.

Despite its considerable length and alien idiom, the film's unaffected purity of style, and the intense, poetic quality of the playing, make it an unusually rewarding, and often moving, experience.

JOHN GILLET.

## EAST OF EDEN

Somewhere about the middle of *East of Eden* (Warners) there is a scene when the boy Caleb, played by James Dean, visits his mother whom he has discovered to be the proprietress of a brothel, in the hope of borrowing money for a business venture. This scene, in which Jo Van Fleet as the mother gives the best supporting performance of the year, is handled with such meaningful economy, and seems the result of such cogent understanding, that it contrasts sharply with the empty show of so much of the rest of the film, and the unhappy preferences this talented director seems in danger of continuing to follow.



*East of Eden* is a film without a centre. One feels that Kazan has been impressed by the allegorical universals implied by the pretentious Biblical parallels of John Steinbeck's novel. The script (by Paul Osborn) confines itself to one section of this portentous work, set in a small Californian town of 40 years ago, dealing mainly with the growing jealousy between Cal and his brother Aron, their love for the same girl, their equal desire for first place in the affections of their austere, lonely father (Adam), and Cal's bitterly triumphant introduction of Aron to their "fallen" mother—which causes the latter, in a moment of revulsion, to enlist in the First World War (and, it is presumed, meet his death there) and allows a minor character to mention to Cal the story of Cain and Abel. To the basic themes of the various natures of love (distorting, blinding, or satisfying, and the consuming loneliness of the boy who yearns for it), Kazan only ever offers a peripheral illustration. The most consistent quality of this is a virile assertiveness. The action of the story seems to be presented, explosively, moment by moment, and these separate stresses never make up a believable rhythmic flow. Relationships are never closely investigated, tables may be thumped and voices raised, but one is never imaginatively drawn or held. In particular, the pivotal jealousy between the two brothers appears almost naïvely unplotted, while in backgrounds busy with cleverness, small parts limp and twitch with such intensity of "character" that the mere business of being people is quite overlooked.

It is, then, this lack of a genuine response, and the consequent inability to convey to his actors the core and essence of the situations, which seems to lead Kazan to favour an acting style that discourages any direct expression. The actors sidle up to their lines, juggle with them, break them up into unusual stresses, erupt into sudden shouts or sink into elaborately natural calm. Only Julie Harris, as Abra the girl, gives a calculated pretence of existing in a charged relation

to the situations. James Dean is a discovery of outstanding talent; at the moment heavily influenced alike by Kazan and Brando, he is sometimes at the mercy of these stylistic borrowings, insufficiently absorbed into a final creative authority. But on the occasions when his own vivid actor's imagination takes wing and bursts these limitations, he is striking. For much of the time, however, the truth of his characterisation is cautious, as if he instinctively felt that a more complex relationship with the others would only involve him with the surrounding falseness.

The film's failure to convey any credible existence in space and time is in fact responsible for its oppressive tedium, and the absence of a feeling of progression in the narrative. The following scene is a case in point. A group of characters are debating the workings of a 1917 motor-car; the scene is cleverly written, the resulting note should be one of humour and charm. But the relentlessly emphatic acting never takes the central object (the car) into account, and the dialogue, though interestingly delivered, is never allowed really to connect with the situation and soon becomes a meaningless onslaught of sound.

This central deficiency of Kazan's results in some unfortunate mishandling of scenes, and the worst of all is the film's climax. The boy's successful business venture yields the money which is to reinstate his father financially; but the gesture is misunderstood, and makes for Caleb's final desperate feeling of rejection. This climactic revelation is shot over Caleb's shoulder, the camera concentrating on the father, until, at the end, the boy circles away in an artily studied movement of distress, staggering out into the night. The result can only appear "arranged" and sterile.

By a curious irony, too, the very scene which could have benefited from Kazan's passion for detailed background—the fairground—is stilted and lifeless; perhaps it was intended as a subjective representation of how it is seen by the distressed

Ying-Tai (centre) and her maid by her lover's tomb: "Shan-Po and Ying-Tai."





boy and girl whose dawning love it backgrounds, but, if so, its meaning does not emerge. And the film ends on a flagrant miscalculation which typifies Kazan at his worst. At Adam's deathbed, which sees his final reconciliation with Caleb, the last character actress is given her fling. To portray an unfeeling nurse, primping and fixing her hair outside the sickroom, the actress is encouraged to deal in such coarse and fidgety overstatement as to verge on caricature and completely disrupt the scene.

It is, of course, Kazan's undoubted talent that sets him so squarely in the line of critical fire. His own standards ask to be judged exactly. That, in dramatic exposition, he has here bitten off more than he can chew, needs to be stated—as does the hope that he may return to the kind of material that evokes the best of his imagination. Here, the scene with the mother, some effective dramatic lighting and much suggestive composition (often remarkably good in this, his first Cinema-Scope production), remind one of his excellence: of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, where his profuse invention constructively served the mood and could be profitably absorbed by actors in rapport with the situation; or of *Panic in the Streets*, where his understanding of the film as a whole created a spare, yet broad and genuinely dramatic drive.

DEREK PROUSE.

## PICASSO

The commentary to this 40-minute film—credited to Antonello Trombadori and the painter Renato Guttuso—is sprinkled with vaporous or lame clichés of art appreciation; it also offers an interpretation of Picasso's career heavily biased by the Party line, but also, I suspect, by an Italian taste for reason and idealism, a distaste for expressionist distortion. After a visually admirable account of the artist's Blue and Pink periods of 1902-07, it traces his many subsequent transformations of the human figure—cubist, surrealist, neo-classical and the rest. He is congratulated for those periodic returns to realism or idealism, or at least to that more benevolent degree of distortion which Guttuso himself has practised. He realised, the film suggests, that art was now and then approaching an impasse; and so he retreated from absurdity. In his violence and extremism he had been a victim, a victim of history, of historical inevitability. The film ends happily with the piping fauns of 1948-49, the ceramics, the War and Peace allegories and a more recent version of that theme which we see the painter engaged in drawing. A good deal of bland exclusion and tidying up has been required to make this interpretation stick, but, even as an opponent of it, I must confess that it only troubled me in retrospect.

So much for the film's argument and, incidentally, I do not recall Luciano Emmer having been so didactic before. Confronted with the most varied material, actuality shots of Picasso's fascinating self, his studio and surroundings, a long span of time and the most complicated output of any painter in history, he has put the camera more modestly and objectively at the service of genius than on other occasions. There is fortunately none of that exaggerated and specious manipulation of the camera, as in the Goya film for example, to give actual movement to a static image, horribly adding physical movement, that is, to symbolised movement. The *Picasso* must be credited with excellent colour (Ferraniacolor), as faithful as any I have seen. The camera handling and the editing is, as always in Emmer's art films, technically admirable, impeccably smooth and precise. The painter's essential genius, his prodigious, green-fingered gift for bringing material to life, for making images which assault us with their vitality, is communicated even if, as I have already suggested, his development and often, I suspect, his motives are misrepresented.

But, and this is a large but, if you cannot share Malraux's acceptance of a world in which works of art may, through all the processes of mechanical reproduction and display, be transformed, be enlarged to a monumental scale or brought to the size of a scarab, be lit so as to look now primitive, now rococo, be edited into a new form and significance, if you do not altogether like art arted up to satisfy someone else's creative impulse and urgency, then you will no doubt prefer the less ingenious, more self-abnegating and "documentary" art films, like the earlier account of Picasso by Paul Haesaerts. You may wish to be allowed to see a whole picture now and then and prefer that the director's own line of imagery be not imposed

upon the painter's. You may hope that the details which the director chooses to isolate should have a meaning connected with the painter's intention and that the pace, rhythm and direction of the camera movement will follow the painter's habits and methods of composition. If so, one must now and then be infuriated by Emmer's obtuse cleverness, his sensitive insensitiveness. But if you like his films, then this is as good as any and has more immediacy than the rest. If you do not, there is still very much to be gained from it and enjoyed.

BASIL TAYLOR.

## A KID FOR TWO FARTHING

Wolf Mankowitz's original story describes an episode in the life of a small boy whose home is in Petticoat Lane. Impressed by a fairy-tale about unicorns who grant wishes, the boy searches for one in the market and, discovering a sickly kid with one horn, buys it as a pet. Soon his wishes for his friends begin to come true: a young wrestler wins the match which will enable him to marry, the tailor gets his long-desired steam presser. But a crowded market street is no home for a kid, and it dies before the boy's own wish, shared with his mother—for them to rejoin his father in Africa—is granted.

Through this slight, discursive story, then, runs a thread of fantasy correspondingly fine. The kid is primarily a pet, and the fantasy about its magic is only one of many in the lively imagination of a child who is also hugely interested in the bustling reality around him. In the film, however, it becomes his constant preoccupation, and he drags the unfortunate creature everywhere as a sort of talisman. The fantasy has in fact been magnified, and so has the violent action towards the end, culminating in the wrestling match. As a result the story has, it seems to me, been unbalanced rather than strengthened. Nor does the substitution of an East End background fantasticated and prettified—St. Paul's at the end of the street, picturesque figures everywhere, dancing at night on the cobbled roadway—strike one as an improvement, for while in the book the boy's fantasy gains by its contrast with his realistic surroundings, in Carol Reed's film the one is as fantastic as the other.

There is, too, another essential difference. The book is about a Jewish community, perfectly integrated with their background—they are authentic, they belong together. Perhaps because of casting problems, four chief characters in the film are not made Jewish: the boy (Jonathan Ashmore), his mother (Celia Johnson), the wrestler (Joe Robinson) and his girl (Diana Dors). This tends unduly to isolate the leading role of the whimsical Jewish tailor (David Kossoff), in an environment which is, after all, more his than theirs.

With its central subject weakened, and its characters appearing rootless, the good things in Carol Reed's film are on the margin. The boy ambling along the whole length of "Fashion Street" (Petticoat Lane) is a witty, incisive sequence in his best style—the Cockney cries, the Eel King, the fake oriental perfume vendor, the hokey-pokey man, the repartee, bargaining and general clamour: all this is skilfully alternated from two points of view, the boy in search of his unicorn and the reactions of the stallholders. The contrast between the child's imaginary world and the rational world of his elders, and his flair for learning the ways of that world—notably when he and the tailor inspect the coveted steam presser together—is at moments tellingly revealed.

The episodic structure imposes limitations on the actors, who have to present sketches rather than rounded portraits, and for this reason some of the smaller parts stand out most vividly—Primo Carnera's almost prehistoric-looking champion, Sidney James' jewellery salesman. *A Kid for Two Farthings*, which is Carol Reed's first essay in fantasy and in colour, also contains some effective use of Eastmancolour, most of all in the ring-side scenes, for which art director (Wilfred Shingleton) and director of photography (Edward Scaife) must share the credit with him.

CATHERINE DE LA ROCHE.

## CAMILLE

On Broadway, a new generation is thronging to Garbo's *Camille*. The actress, for whose return one has never given up hope, is proving that a 19-year-old film has preserved her splendour undimmed—indeed, it is memory that has proved unequal to preserving her magic quality. The film is now being reissued in England, and after fifteen years of retirement the



Oscar, which has stopped some strange doors in its time, has been awarded to her, rectifying the persistent omission that has made its presentation a joke.

That the uncompromising artistry of this great actress should have flourished for as long as it did, is to Hollywood's—or, more particularly, M.G.M.'s—eternal credit. To sell her highly uncommercial quality, one of the cinema's greatest publicity campaigns was devised, in which the normal working conditions upon which she insisted were made to seem the caprices of an outlandish goddess. The protective privacy she exacted was no extravagant demand; a stranger's intrusive stare would instantly have shattered the defenceless creative concentration she employed—for her personality was the most economically expressive the screen has evolved, owing allegiance only to the cinema, its potency conceived entirely in the medium's purest terms.

Dumas' Marguerite still remains a great role for a great actress, a dated piece of romantic artifice for the less than great. In *Camille*, Cukor's direction led Garbo deeper into the heart of the situations than ever before, and into the greatest triumph of her career. Deserting the Olympian private world in which she often created alone, she moves here in constant and fluent relationship with everything and everyone around her. The period costumes reveal her splendid shoulders and the liquid grace of her most typical movement—her head thrown back in abandoned laughter, or her eyes closed in an anguished ecstasy of love.

Even before her talent, Garbo's prerequisite for her creations is the quality of her imagination. The need is not that the qualities of sweetness, nobility and radiance should exist in her as a person, but that their imaginative apprehension should evoke in her the powerful creative response that they do. These qualities, fused into the glorious character conception we know as the screen Garbo, moving through the situations, illuminate the ideal conception of womanhood—no longer of this age: a figure of a romantic stature deriving from the nineteenth century rather than from today.

She is the sound cinema's greatest possessor of the tragic gift. Her end is always in her beginnings; the intensity of her happiness with Armand in the country is exquisitely shadowed by the moving overtones of her tragic end. (In the comedy *Ninotchka*, this quality explains why, when she fell in love and bought the frivolous little hat, the absurd delight one felt was not without a lump in the throat: a comedy tone only Hepburn has equalled.) Her renunciation scene is desperately affecting, and the death of Camille is the greatest thing she has ever played. There have been actresses who have brought a more dazzlingly intricate texture to their work, but no one has ever equalled Garbo's emotional authority or sheer screen-filling power.

One leaves the cinema after *Camille* uncertain for the moment where familiar bus routes pass, unwilling to dissipate the awed and uplifted certainty that one has been in the presence of greatness.

DEREK PROUSE.

## DON GIOVANNI

When Powell and Pressburger made their film of *The Tales of Hoffmann* they made a film of it. There was no pretence that the action could have been presented in an opera-house.

Now another British company, Harmony Films, has tackled Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. This is not an operatic film, however, but a filmed opera. The late Wilhelm Furtwängler is seen walking to the conductor's rostrum, and the performance reproduces that given (with singers and orchestra of the Vienna State Opera) at last year's Salzburg Festival. What follows is an attempt to convey the substance of the opera as it appears in the opera-house. It does not do this, for a simple and lamentable reason: the sound-track is hopelessly bad. Half-way through the Press showing, the promoters turned the volume down, but this made little improvement. The loud passages remain merely noisy. Sudden changes of volume may be heard when a character apparently leaves the range of one microphone and approaches another. The tone-quality is uniformly distressing, and what appears to be an excellent musical performance goes to waste.

Discussion of other aspects of the film can therefore be brief. The opera is given complete, with an interval between the acts; and it seems a very long three hours. Parts that normally are fast and exciting enough—particularly when the



Garbo in "Camille."

Statue eventually enters to bring Don Giovanni to supernatural justice—seem slow here. This is doubtless because in the theatre the eye wanders round, taking in various aspects of the scene in turn; the camera, itself selective, leaves the eye without that work to do.

Not that Paul Czinner, the director, allows any freakish or merely fanciful camera-work. The effect of a stage performance (in the enormous Salzburg auditorium known as the Rocky Riding School) is faithfully preserved. The action is uninterrupted, and there are not even subtitles: instead, a long synopsis appears on the screen at the beginning of each act. This is to demand far too much retentiveness of an audience, for the plot is "difficult" and the sung language is Italian.

The words "Salzburg" and "Vienna" always provoke automatic genuflexions from the English musical public. But a film of *The Marriage of Figaro*, sung in Edward J. Dent's racy English version by the best British and American singers, would do more than the present film to persuade the layman that opera is not in itself a particularly inaccessible form of art. I assume, of course, a decent sound-track next time.

ARTHUR JACOBS.

## IN BRIEF

**THE CONSTANT HUSBAND** (*British Lion*). The "Man Who Has Lost His Memory" (persuasively played by Rex Harrison), waking up in a fishing village that looks very foreign to him but turns out to be nothing more exotic than Wales, gradually discovers himself to have been a bigamist of no mean order. Time remembered was spent, under a variety of names and occupations, with six different wives. From this excellent comic idea, by himself and Val Valentine, Sidney Gilliat has created a comedy generally above the average and at times really witty. The story demands, in effect, a series of *tours de force*; it does not always receive them, but at least rises to a splendid final one, incisively written and deliciously played by Margaret Leighton as an elegant lady barrister who



pleads the case in court with an ingenuity and fervour that clearly betrays her wish to become No. 7. The weakest part of *The Constant Husband* is the long encounter with Lola Sopranelli, wife No. 2, and her family of predatory Soho Italians, in which a bright situation is lost in some crude over-farical performances. The direction is at times a bit slapdash, but the film breathes a welcome air of sophistication into British comedy, and provides some distinct enjoyment.—*James Morgan*.

**20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA** (Disney). Despite its incredible borrowings from U.P.A., the new Disney cartoon (*Toot, Whistle, Plunk and Boom*) which accompanies *20,000 Leagues* confirms, if confirmation were needed, his imaginative abdication as cartoonist. His movie production of Verne's marvellous adventure story (directed by Richard Fleischer) proves, however, that—consciously or otherwise—he can still be singularly brilliant in other directions. With the twilight last sequences and oleograph sunset of *A Star is Born*, and the splendidly fake-Wagnerian opening of *Valley of Fury*, Cinema-Scope has already suggested "gothick" possibilities; using Verne's piece of Victorian machine poetry as a basis, Disney has thoroughly explored these possibilities, and at the same time wedded them to a naïve tract on atomics. The film ends with Captain Nemo's island base surrounded by warships without flags, and Kiplingesque soldiers wearing mourning bands round their helmets converging upon his installation just too late to prevent him setting off what is to be "the greatest explosion the world has ever known." Vulcania unfurls into a lemon-coloured mushroom, more beautiful but less terrifying than those we see on newsreels, and the voice of Arronax on the soundtrack expresses hope that mankind may still turn Nemo's discovery to peaceful ends.

Of movie necessity Disney had to abandon Verne's conception of Nemo's monster submarine, the *Nautilus*, as moving through a sideshow of Natural Marvels, and the plot has been slanted to bring out the "humanity" and tough gaiety of Ned Land (Kirk Douglas) more than the brooding whims of Nemo (James Mason). Arronax (Paul Lukas) remains, as in the book, a rather colourless cipher, and Peter Lorre, the valet, is a Comic Cuts figure, unable to live down the memory of other elegiacally sinister performances. Lorre is supported by Captain Nemo's pet, played by the most affected sea-lion ever to come up from the depths.

To counterbalance this last piece of Disneyana, and the *longueurs* of the tract, there are moments of grotesque or moving splendour—Nemo playing Bach on the organ installed in his velvet-draped, ornate salon, the blind across the great observer's window unfurling like an inverse flower to reveal the heart-piercing blue of the ocean; the crew moving like deep-sea crusaders to bury a comrade and plant a coral cross on his grave; the fretted, barbaric *Nautilus*, which might have been designed by Paxton, shedding green light as it hurtles to attack ships. These moments fully accord with the tenets of sea-romanticism, that obsession of the nineteenth century which has received such a curious twentieth-century impetus from the books of Diöle, Haas and Cousteau. Undersea has become, one suspects, a new Eden, a "return to paradise" for the terrene inhabitants of a world gone on a hydrogen-cobalt jag—as it was for similar reasons, but in the context of his own period, that Captain Nemo fled to the pastoral seclusion of the *Nautilus*.

In resting the burden of our own anxieties on the braided shoulders of this Victorian superman, and through exploiting the current preoccupation with fantastic adventure and frog-men, Disney has found it easy to produce an adventure film which retains all the traditional benefits of that *genre*, but has the extra curiosity value of being like something overheard in a streamlined movie-lot confessional.—*Roy Edwards*.

## SHORT FILMS

**THURSDAY'S CHILDREN** (Republic). Shot entirely at the Royal School for Deaf and Dumb Children in Margate, pitched midway between a "documentary" and a personal impression, this is the freshest, most human short film to be made in this country since *David*; and it is pleasant to report its award of an "Oscar" by the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as the best short subject of 1954, and its acceptance here by the Granada circuit. While *Thursday's Children* certainly gives an idea of the methods of work

involved, and the dedication on both sides, teachers and pupils, they demand, the memory that one carries away is principally of a particular, enclosed world. It is a world in which sounds are seen in a mirror, breathed, identified by pictures, caught in the fingers through a vibrating balloon, touched by a hand laid across the cheek; but never heard. Because they cannot hear, the children communicate more privately and intensely than others do, and during the games they play, the lessons they learn, it is their faces which, in a touching and expressive eagerness, reflect this predicament. With this delicate subject, the makers, Guy Brenton and Lindsay Anderson, have achieved an unusual purity of emotional response. Without words, the commentary says, there can be no thoughts: only feelings—and it is in a world of feelings that *Thursday's Children*, who have far to go, are most acutely, sensitively portrayed.

The commentary, with its attractive and felt simplicity, is worthily spoken by Richard Burton; the photography (Walter Lassally) matches it perfectly, and the music (Geoffrey Wright) is mainly sympathetic and discreet. The film is presented by World Wide Pictures, who enterprisingly took it over after viewing it at a silent rough-cut stage.—*Gavin Lambert*.

**HELP!** In a deserted Italian street, two figures are locked in mortal combat. One breaks away and the other gives chase. The trail leads him to two women; from the first of these, his own ingratiating manner extracts an account of his assailant's brutal nature; from the second, the questioner—now changed and surly—provokes a revelation of the character he seeks as gentle and kind, under the temperamental domination of this woman. A shadow in the hall betrays the presence of the hunted man, and the chase begins again, to end in the same locked combat of two fighters whose faces the lamplight reveals as identical.

When confidence and determination triumph over the numerous setbacks facing the independent film-maker, it is always a pleasure to be able to salute the result and own the energy not misplaced. On the above simplified Pirandelloesque theme, a young American, Glenn Alvey, has made an arresting short film (15 minutes), very well shot by Pier Ludovico Pavoni in the night streets of Rome. Signs of haste and the pressure of limited resources are evident, but the director's talents are marked enough to emerge clearly all the same. The conception is genuinely felt and grasped, the unforced shape of the work leaves an impression of tactful authority. There is, one feels, an imagination capable of thinking in direct and effective cinema terms; an awareness, too, of the need for apt and expressive "business" for the actors; and the tone of the dialogue effectively blends realism and dream to serve the mood of alarm.

The version shown privately here is poorly dubbed by English-speaking Italians in two cases, and some ambiguously accented words to ill-matched lip movements occasionally cloud the meaning of the lines. But one has no quarrel with the physical images, and there is a striking performance by Giovanna Galletti, who played the lesbian agent in *Open City*.—*Derek Prouse*.

**AFRICAN CONFLICT** (Granada). The Granada Group has enterprisingly released this combination of two American television films presented by Ed Murrow in his C.B.S. "See it Now" series, in which Howard K. Smith conducts a series of candid camera interviews in South Africa cogently angled to the problem of *apartheid*. His engaging technique, with its shrewdly dispassionate air, yields much: with ordinary people—a touching scene with a Bantu mother and her family of thirteen all living in the same room, a revealing one with a group of Boer farmers at tea on a sun-terrace—and with personalities involved professionally on both sides. There is an extraordinary moment when Mr. Strydom, having agreed to grant his interviewer three questions, is asked a fourth, and merely holds up his hands above his eyes with a quick, formidable gesture to signify that the bounds of convention have been over-reached. The exchanges with Father Huddleston and with Dr. Xuma, the African nationalist leader, are fruitful and impressive. This investigation of racial tensions and injustices caused by a rigid segregational policy is an absorbing piece of reportage and at times a masterpiece of indirect statement. One hopes that more in the same series will follow.—*James Morgan*.



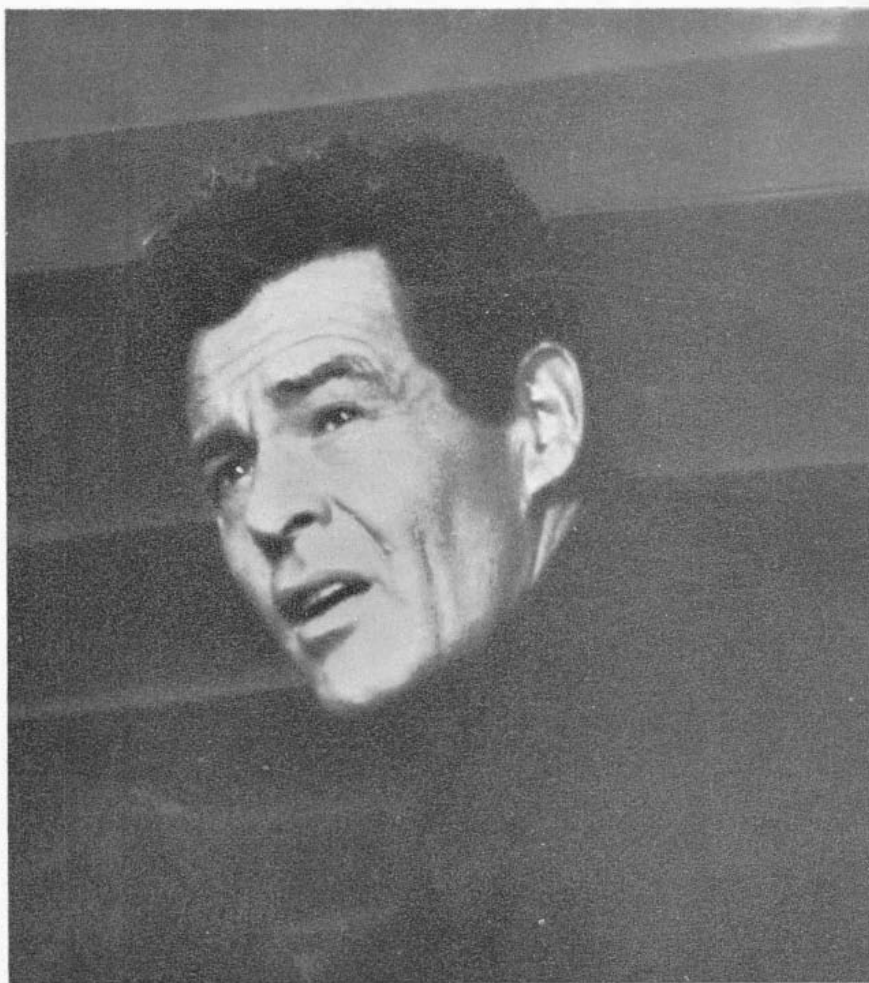
## PEOPLE OF TALENT (2)

# Robert Ryan

SINCE his first screen appearance in 1943 (in a very minor war film called *Bombardier*), Robert Ryan has made thirty-five films. One cannot claim that he has been neglected; but one can say that he has all too frequently been wasted. In his recent book, *In Search of Theatre*, Eric Bentley remarks that one sign of a decadent medium is not its lack but its wastage of talent; the theatre is full of gifted and original players who are too rarely given roles worthy of them and lack the sustained opportunity for developing themselves. This is even more true of the cinema, where, in the attempt to appeal to the widest audience of all, producers are cautious in employing unconventional personalities. In fact, when a young actor becomes a star, it is almost obligatory for him to play romantic parts—if not, if he is considered unsuitable for them or if the public will not accept him as a hero, he will nearly always find himself relegated to a series of villains or subsidiary “character” roles, with the occasional chance of creating something fuller and more ambitious. This is what happened to Robert Ryan.

He did not turn to acting until his middle 20's, after a series of jobs—as a salesman, a miner, a chauffeur, a docker, a photographic model, a cowboy—following the Depression years. Then he spent a legacy on dramatic training at the Max Reinhardt school, where he was a pupil of Vladimir Sokoloff. From there he went to Broadway, playing opposite Tallulah Bankhead in Odets' *Clash by Night* and with Luise Rainer in *A Kiss for Cinderella*. He made his first considerable impact in films in Edward Dmytryk's *Crossfire* (1947), with his study of the sly, obsessively anti-Semitic G.I., played with a subtly uneasy, unpleasant concentration and a suppressed undercurrent of brutality. (He recreated this role admirably in *Bad Day at Black Rock*.) Not surprisingly, some of the best parts he has subsequently been given were along these lines: inwardly tormented and obsessed again as the ex-prisoner of war in Zinnemann's *Act of Violence*, as the cynical, embittered local projectionist which he replayed for Lang's screen version of *Clash by Night*, as the cruel, eccentric millionaire in Ophuls' *Caught*. Excellent as all these performances were, two others have perhaps been more impressive, since they extended his range and suggested his true resources: the tired, ageing boxer in *The Set-Up*, with his shabbiness and pathos, and the withdrawn, trapped Mr. Leslie in *About Mrs. Leslie*. All these achievements reveal an actor of sharply developed instincts and technique. One cannot, in fact, recall a performance by Ryan that is unclinch or uncertain; to less demanding films like *The Naked Spur* or *Inferno*, he brings to the part of ruthless villain or betrayed revengeful husband a trained precision and a strong natural flair.

Interestingly enough, all these characterisations have something in common. The figures that Robert Ryan creates with such authority are all, in different ways, isolated; if their aloofness is not due, as in *Crossfire* or *Act of Violence*, to some violent obsession, it conceals



something else—the secret of failure, or personal unhappiness, or extreme discontent. It is this persisting inner quality of restlessness, of disturbance, that gives him his individuality and also commits him to the numerous stereotyped “menace” roles. The choice of *Coriolanus* for his last theatrical appearance—in John Houseman's production at an off-Broadway theatre three years ago—again seems characteristic. For while a combination of fairly introspective sensibility and physical force is something temperamentally not uncommon in America, it needs the veil of glamour and intimacy such as Brando supplies for audiences to identify themselves unreservedly with it. There is no such direct appeal in Ryan's personality, and for this reason the tension his performances communicate is more disconcerting. There is something vital not fully yielded up; he seems essentially as much removed from his audience as they from him; and so his talent remains exceptional but mysterious and solitary.

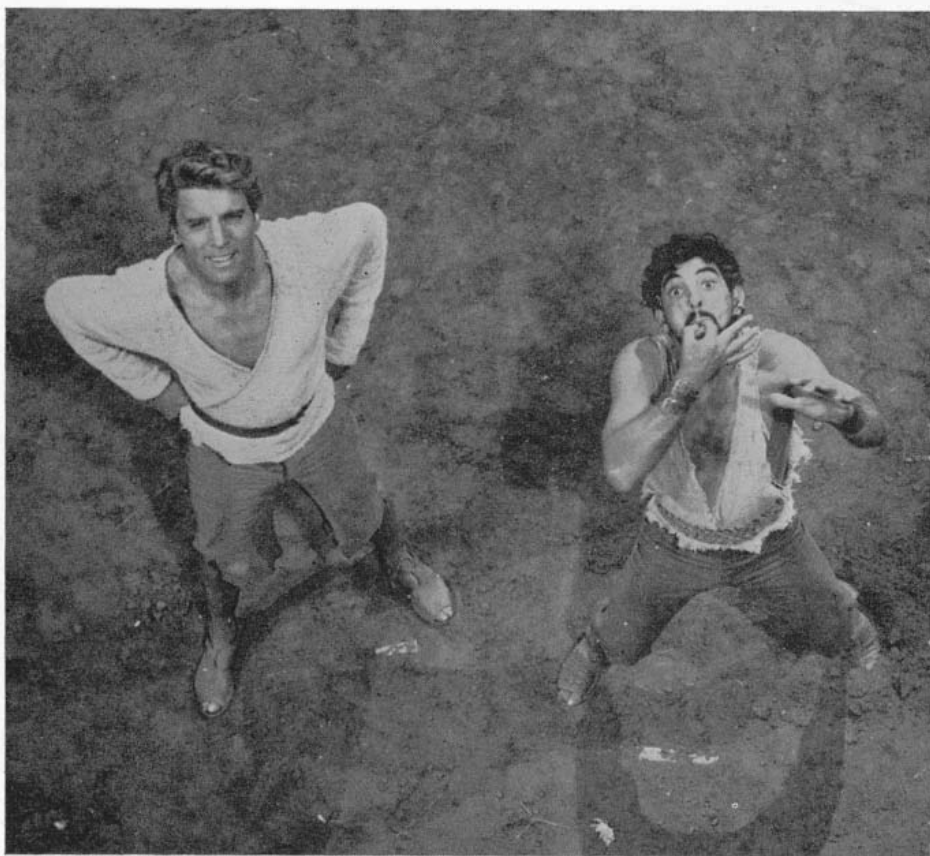
SOME OF ROBERT RYAN'S FILMS: 1943, *Bombardier* (Richard Wallace), *Behind the Rising Sun*, *Tender Comrade* (Dmytryk); 1947, *Woman on the Beach* (Renoir), *Crossfire* (Dmytryk); 1948, *Berlin Express* (Tourneur), *Act of Violence* (Zinnemann), *Boy with Green Hair* (Losey); 1949, *Caught* (Ophuls), *The Set-Up* (Wise); 1950, *The Secret Fury* (Mel Ferrer), *Born to be Bad* (Ray); 1951, *Best of the Bad Men* (Russell), *The Racket* (Cromwell), *On Dangerous Ground* (Ray); 1952, *Clash by Night* (Lang), *Horizons West* (Boetticher); 1953, *The Naked Spur* (Sturges), *Inferno* (Baker); 1954, *About Mrs. Leslie* (Daniel Mann), *Bad Day at Black Rock* (Sturges); 1955, *Escape to Burma* (Dwan).





# HECHT-LANCASTER PRODUCTIONS

by James Morgan



THE partnership of Harold Hecht and Burt Lancaster, who formed their own production company in Hollywood eight years ago, has produced some of the liveliest and most individual of recent American entertainment films in a period which has seen the general decline of this kind of production. These films, arriving singly for review, have received somewhat cursory notice from most critics, and yet, as a body of work from a company which still, one feels, has its most ambitious achievements ahead of it, they have some firmly distinctive qualities.

First, the personalities. Harold Hecht, now 48, son of a New York iron contractor, began as a student at the American Laboratory Theatre in the early 20's, where he worked under Richard Boleslawsky. (Of Polish origin, Boleslawsky had originally worked in Moscow with Stanislavsky, written one of the classic textbooks on acting, and made films in Poland before emigrating to America.) Later he was assistant to Boleslawsky on his Broadway productions; then became

a dancer, notably with the Martha Graham company. He arrived in Hollywood in the 30's—where Boleslawsky, never to find the right outlet for his talents, had embarked on a series of ambiguous "prestige" productions such as *Rasputin and the Empress*, *Les Misérables* and *The Garden of Allah*—and was engaged as dance director on a number of films, including *She Done Him Wrong* and *Horse Feathers*. After a few years he left Hollywood to go back to the theatre, working for the Federal Theatre Project until it was disbanded, then returning to the West Coast to establish a literary agency. After war service he continued the agency business, expanding it to include actors and directors; Burt Lancaster became one of his clients, and in 1947 they formed their own company.

When Burt Lancaster became Hecht's client, he had just appeared in Harry Brown's play *A Sound of Hunting* (later filmed by the Stanley Kramer company as *Eight Iron Men*) on Broadway, and earned some favourable notices. It was his first professional engage-

Top left: "Vera Cruz." Above: with Nick Cravat in "The Crimson Pirate."



ment. The play only ran three weeks, but there was no shortage of Hollywood offers, and Lancaster signed a contract with Hal Wallis. While waiting for his first film to be decided, he was loaned to the late Mark Hellinger for the part of "Swede" in *The Killers*, a melodrama directed by Robert Siodmak and ingeniously expanded from a Hemingway short story. In the next few years he played a full quota of laconic parts in laconic underworld thrillers—*I Walk Alone*, *Criss Cross*, *Rope of Sand*, etc.—as well as in Jules Dassin's interesting prison film also produced by Hellinger, *Brute Force*. In these early days, too, he made a gesture which indicated the independent nature later to assert itself more fully; he took the altogether less stereotyped role of the eldest son in the film of Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*.

Lancaster is, of course, one of the most successful stars in Hollywood, at 41 an established box-office favourite with a ready-made appeal that producers have been quick to understand and exploit. ("With the fans, he's in like a burglar," one producer has remarked.) The background to his life, though, was unconventional, and its influence clearly broke through when he began his association with Hecht. The son of a New York post office employee, he first showed a strong talent for athletics and acrobatics, and spent most of the 30's in circuses, doing a horizontal bar act for a touring company with a friend and fellow-acrobat, Nick Cravat. He didn't turn to acting until the end of World War 2, when he appeared in the Harry Brown play, and he was, and remains, dramatically untutored. This is no rare thing, incidentally, for a Hollywood star, and no great drawback if the star is willing to accept the adeptness of producers at creating a "personality" mould. Like many "personality" performers, Lancaster gained experience in his first films without, so to speak, letting the audience know. But, unlike many of them, he has not been content to remain in the mould. Beneath the toughness, the rugged physical power and sexuality, in fact, one has always sensed an independent and humorous spirit, with sensibilities more extended than most of his roles would suggest. There has, too, been something uncertain and incompletely developed about this assertion of independence: "*this odd mixture of violence and decency*," as Lindsay Anderson wrote, "*this goodwill that has not quite found a satisfactory channel of expression*." Lancaster has obviously put a good deal of himself into his work with Hecht, and there are tensions and aspirations in it that strike one as personal.

2

*The Flame and the Arrow* (1950), a costume adventure with Lancaster as a kind of seventeenth century Robin Hood, is a film of undeniable gusto but over-full of crudities. It lacks the genuine pantomimic freedom that was later to make *The Crimson Pirate* much more appealing. It makes clear, though, from the first, the preference of nearly all the Hecht-Lancaster films for a non-contemporary, non-American setting, and it also casts Lancaster in a role on which he was to play a number of variations. He is the rebel-crusader, out of sympathy with many accepted social codes, a friend of the poor and oppressed, and ironically mistrustful of the corruption and oversophistication of wealth. There are two reflections of this in *The Flame and the Arrow*: the comedy scenes of Dardo's young son—Dardo's wife has deserted him for the tyrannous German duke, and taken their child with her—being taught effete court etiquette and dancing; and the taming of a beautiful and proud Marchioness (Virginia Mayo), which follows a familiar attraction-rejection route

before the union of peasant and noblewoman (and the overthrow of the German tyrants) can be celebrated.

In this film, too, Lancaster's former circus partner, Nick Cravat, appears as a member of the Robin Hood band, first making his genial deaf-mute characterisation and sharing the acrobatics which form the most successful part of the entertainment. The climactic attack on the palace contains some enjoyable and spectacular leaps from balcony to chandelier, a carnival interlude when the raiders disguise themselves as clowns, and a gay epilogue when the pair celebrate their victory by swinging and vaulting from house to house.

The next film, *Ten Tall Men* (1951), is a Foreign Legion adventure with synthetic Moroccan settings, rather slackly directed by Willis Goldbeck (a former "B" picture director who worked with Boleslawsky on *Garden of Allah*) and unable to make up its mind how seriously to take itself. It starts as quite agreeable burlesque but proceeds to alternate perfunctory action-sequences and self-mockery. There is a captive Arab princess to be tamed this time, whom Jody Lawrence makes quite a worthy successor in her way to Virginia Mayo's Anne of Hesse. The opening reels are the most satisfactory, containing a gay characterisation of an Arab servant by Robert Clary (whose comic gifts were later to be revealed in *New Faces*) and a wry pick-up sequence; Lancaster pursues a hip-swinging blonde dancer back to her apartment, and after the first fervent embrace they ask each other's names. This settled, he presents her with a piece of cheap imitation jewellery bought in the market-place, claiming it to be an heirloom that belonged to his mother. She looks at him with weary contempt, "*I don't believe you ever had a mother. . . .*"

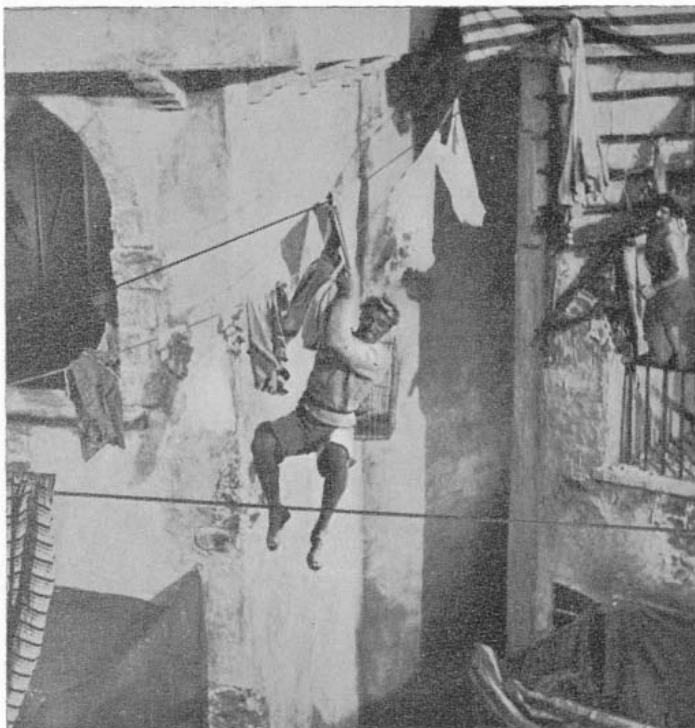
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*The Crimson Pirate* (1952), with an inventive script by Roland Kibbee and the exuberance of Robert Siodmak's direction, is altogether superior. It was shot entirely in Europe: exteriors in Ischia, interiors in England, and it seems to gain its physical and atmospheric freshness not only by the genuine locations but by a distance from the front-office. Lancaster plays Captain Vallo, an eighteenth century pirate who, with his deaf-mute friend and fellow sailor (Cravat) helps the islanders of Salina to overthrow Spanish tyranny. A prologue has Lancaster advising the



"Apache." Jean Peters, Burt Lancaster





"Acrobatics: 'The Crimson Pirate.'"

audience to believe at most half of what it sees, and the swash-bucklings and romantic intrigues that follow are conducted with a good deal of burlesque and deliberate improbability. Vallo and Ojo, to gain the islanders' sympathy, deliberately provoke the Spanish militia; pursued, they taunt and evade their would-be captors with a series of acrobatic feats, climbing over housetops, swinging on ropes from window to window, using whatever comes to hand—a line of washing, canopies, fishing nets—as props. The same element of improvisation informs the sequence when the two pirates and Prudence the scientist, abandoned in a rowing boat that overturns, and finding themselves on the ocean-bed when it sinks, discover they are in an air-pocket and walk to shore with the boat held over their heads.

There is, however, Consuelo (Eva Bartok), daughter of the rebel leader, to be tamed; and some of the serio-comic minor figures—the aged, lecherous island governor, perpetually disappointed that revolution is not imminent and he cannot order his big guns to be fired, the "heavy" Baron Gruda—are not realised with complete certainty of touch. From time to time burlesque gets out of hand, and the tongue lies rather heavy in the cheek; but it is always a question of simple high spirits taking over, and the general tone of the film is engagingly buoyant and vivacious.

From a production point of view, also, *The Crimson Pirate* has much more to offer; Otto Heller's Technicolor photography and Paul Sheriff's sets give it a continually pleasing, stylish surface, and there is none of the tawdriness of the earlier films.

The next exploration is of the South Seas. In *His Majesty O'Keefe* (1953), Lancaster plays a sailor who in the 1870's discovers the potential riches in copra on the island of Yap, and is eventually, after rescuing its inhabitants from the tyranny of German pirates, accepted as a king. He settles down with a halfe-caste girl amid this community of noble savages. This is a haphazardly constructed piece of work, on which the director (Byron

Haskin) scarcely seeks to impose grasp; its extensive and affectionate Fijian locations (again beautifully photographed by Otto Heller) give it a freshness that partially atones for its dramatic weakness. The introductory sequences—O'Keefe's restless thirst for travel and adventure, his first enthusiasm for the island, his response to a freer and more simplified existence—have a sincerity about them, and the wealth of description in the film (native dances, feasts, landscapes), though unassimilated, conveys an air of discovery. O'Keefe himself, though, for all his muscular geniality, emerges as a somewhat dubious figure. The love affair this time is free of the usual tensions, but there is a persistent streak of ruthlessness in his "persuasion" of the islanders to harvest copra for him and make his fortune. Obviously preferable though he is to the Germans, one feels at the end that His Majesty is a kind of feudal tyrant whose benevolence springs rather too much from self-interest.

Both *Apache* and *Vera Cruz* (1954) are more ambitious films. They introduce a new director, Robert Aldrich (who was Polonsky's assistant on *Force of Evil*), with a pronounced visual flair; they give Lancaster more developed characterisations, and their material is more complex. *Apache* is based on the story of Massai, last of the Indian warriors, who escapes capture and transportation after Geronimo's surrender, and finds his way back to the Apache reserve to continue the struggle against the white man. The story develops on two levels; there is Massai's relationship with Nalinle (Jean Peters), the girl who becomes his wife—at first he believes she has betrayed him, and treats her with extreme brutality, but is finally won by her devotion—and their outcast life together in the mountain hut; and there is the couple's struggle to assert the dignity and independence of their race, misunderstood by the white men until a too slickly contrived ending. This is a film of unmistakably genuine feeling. Massai's escape to St. Louis, his slow and silent awe of a city at night, the harshness of his treatment of Nalinle, the pride and sometimes cruel reserve he maintains even when she has become his trusted wife, their instinctive acceptance of austerity, struggle, solitude—in all this an honest, sympathetic attempt at penetrating an alien way of life can be discerned. Both Lancaster and Jean Peters play with integrity; but they are not—no white actors can be—finally acceptable. It is not only their speech which impedes conviction, but the unavoidable impression that these are, in fact, white people pretending to be Indians. They are pretending very sincerely, but this is not, of course, the same as a true re-creation.

*Vera Cruz*, the story of two adventurers who accept a commission from the Emperor Maximilian of Mexico, during the 1860's revolution, to escort a Countess and a hoard of gold to the port of Vera Cruz, where both will be shipped to Europe, is a curious, wayward and rather bitter film. The adventurers are presented as unscrupulous and cunning individualists, and there is a good deal of cynicism in the attitude toward their intrigues; they find themselves in temporary alliance because they both work for the side that pays best, but they are always wary of each other. Erin (Lancaster) is a handsome, smiling and confident villain, Trane (Gary Cooper) has a middle-aged laconic reserve that suggests there may be allegiances buried in his nature. Naturally both are tempted en route to steal the gold, with which Maximilian intends to buy troops from Europe; naturally the nubile Countess (Denise Darcel) intends to carry off the money for herself and a lover. The climax comes when Trane discovers his conscience and decides that the gold rightly belongs to Mexico, and must be handed over to the Juaristas; in order to do this, he has to shoot Erin, who is just about to disappear with it.



This relationship between the two men, crystallising as it does in a situation of political emergency, is an interesting one; and the idea of a respect, a cautious affection growing up between them until events reveal Erin as an unrepentant opportunist and oblige the lonely Trane to shoot him, has rich possibilities. Through deficiencies in script and direction, however, these are only partially realised, and the final impression is a rather confusing one. The dramatic framework is loose, episodic; the film starts promisingly with the first meeting of Erin and Trane, who proceed to cheat and deceive each other with a casual irony, but once the journey with the gold and the Countess starts there is no firm narrative hold on the different elements of the story. Erin and the Countess have a violent love-hate interlude, in which he first makes love to her, then accuses her of duplicity and hits her in the face. Trane is attracted to a thieving peasant girl with Juarista allegiances. The Countess pursues her own schemes, and the coach is subjected to various attacks by the revolutionaries. The backgrounds are continually fascinating; Aldrich is at his best with spectacular, descriptive and action sequences, and the whole atmosphere of the film, exotic and turbulent, comes off admirably. There is lavish observation of landscape, people, customs, and a strong sense of immediacy. But with the character relationships,

he is too superficial, letting them slip away too often in a shrug of irony, failing to sustain the urgently growing tensions within the band of travellers. In the end, there has been an excess of action and bloodshed, and the fatal gunfight between Erin and Trane comes as just another battle, its human implications lost.

4

A theme persists, an interest in a particular kind of human experience is embodied, in all these films. The specific attraction of other peoples, other places, generously recorded, is paralleled by a wider preference for the life of the open air. The Western, of course, has amply reflected this side of the American character in its way, but the Western has a nostalgic tradition born of pride and delight in a period of national history, with its pioneering characters who so quickly became legends and the simple grandeur of its struggles and explorations. In recent years this tradition has been sophisticated, with the emergence of the mysterious wandering cowboy character (in *Shane*, *Man Without a Star*, etc.) in search of something he never finds, riding off at the end to another distant adventure. The emotions of *His Majesty O'Keefe* or *Apache* or *Vera Cruz*, though incompletely expressed, have a point of contact with this; inward aspirations seek fulfilment in physical action and alien

*Vera Cruz*": a dance sequence.





places.

Violent means in these films generally point the way to pacific, vaguely idealistic ends. The theme of a liberation from tyranny recurs with the revolutions that form the background to *The Flame and the Arrow*, *The Crimson Pirate* and *Vera Cruz*, with Massai's stand against the advancing white men and O'Keefe's overthrow of the German marauders. But as well as the general democratic message there is something, on the personal level, more ambiguous; not only is the hero an outlaw or wanderer who prefers not to settle down with the people whose freedom he helps to win (only O'Keefe, in the remote idyllic South Seas, finds peace), but the traditions of the adventure story are themselves mocked—in *Vera Cruz*, particularly, the ironic asides are so persistent that the film's dramatic force gradually dissipates—and an appetite for the sheer excitement of action, or financial reward, struggles for priority with the hero's moral conscience. This irresolution, in fact, seems really to reflect the clash of personal impulse and social obligation, the familiar problem of "adjustment."

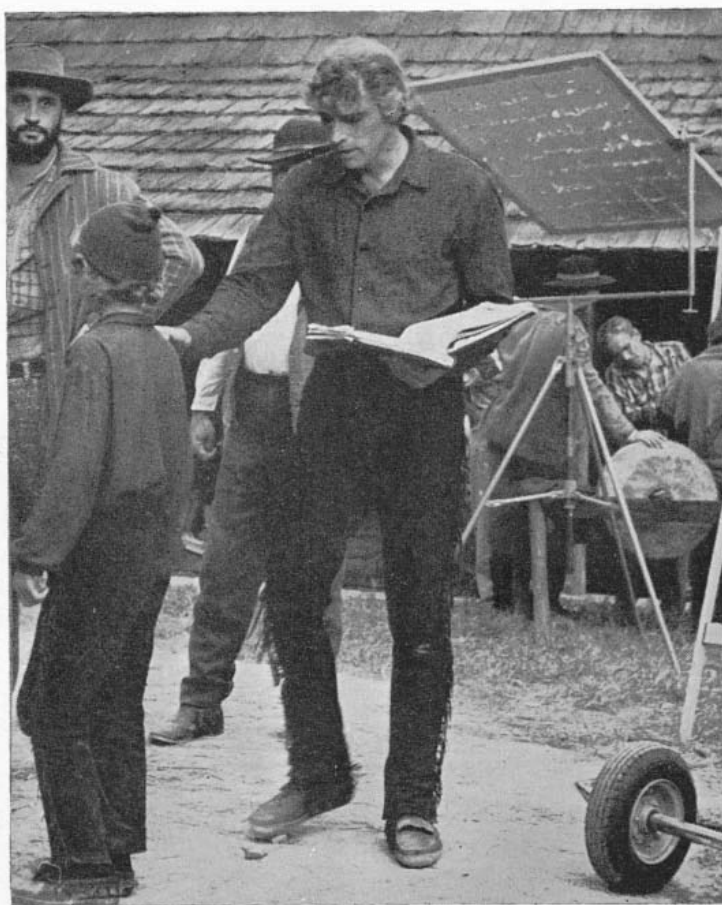
Here is the main difference between Lancaster and Fairbanks. In his tales of resource and daring, Fairbanks fulfilled himself. He belonged to an old-fashioned, more ordered world, happily pre-Freudian, in which pride in the good deed done was sufficient and the imprisoned maiden was helpless and docile, shyly accepting at last the protective gentlemanly arms of her hero. The Fairbanks outlook was practical and unquestioningly self-reliant, temptation did not exist for him, sex was never a compulsive desire but something clean and unostentatious to be expressed in the tranquil symbols of roses, pearls and moonlight. Lancaster carries with him the problems of most modern heroes. His vital and sensuous pleasure in physical sensation sets him apart, but its extremes—the excess of violence, the intensified sex-warfare—betray pressures of the age of anxiety. As a result, there is a lack of wholeness in these films; their spirit is inquiring and genial, their pleasure in movement and adventure frequently communicates itself, but their mood is disrupted by incongruities. With the exception of Jean Peters in *Apache*, the women are Hollywood pretties, sometimes patently absurd in the costume and rank attributed to them, and never to be taken seriously in spite of the rough treatment their behaviour may incur. At the same time, the repeated taming of the shrew motif exists, and there are outbursts, like the assault on the Countess in *Vera Cruz*, in which the tension, though extraneous, is real. Here, too, the nervous energy behind the physical

exuberance is apparent, and gratuitous details of brutality embroider the battle sequences. (In *The Flame and the Arrow*, notably inventive in matters of violence, palace guards are set alight with candelabra as well as being kicked in the stomach and soundly thwacked with halberds.) These elements disturb the tone of the films as entertainment, though they are not, as in so many other American productions, inserted with a corrupt cynicism; they break out, rather, coarse and ugly, like uncontrollable eruptions.

Since his partnership with Hecht began, Lancaster has of course continued to play in other films, and his choice of roles reflects both a desire for extended acting experience and for genuinely worthwhile material. In *Come Back, Little Sheba* he was too young and technically under-equipped for the part, but his sincerity created an impression true in its outlines; and as the rough, hardened sergeant in *From Here to Eternity* he found a characterisation completely within his range, and played with a telling ease and force. Now he has just finished a part opposite Anna Magnani in the version of Tennessee Williams' *The Rose Tattoo*, and directed his first film, *The Kentuckian*, a Western story shot almost entirely on location.

The creative part of Harold Hecht in these films is less easy to define, although two factors immediately occur; as producer, he has developed an increasing independence, and from *The Crimson Pirate* onwards has admirably dispensed with many conventions of large-scale studio filmmaking; as a former dancer, he undoubtedly appreciates and understands the acrobat. The acrobatic sequences in *The Crimson Pirate* have, apart from their intrinsic vitality, the exhilaration of someone enjoying freedom to do something he can do well. Otherwise, perhaps, the most direct clue lies in *Marty*, the recent Hecht-Lancaster production (without the star) that won first prize at this year's Cannes

(continued on page 55)



Above: Lancaster, directing "The Kentuckian," in which he stars, on location. Left: Harold Hecht with a visitor on the set of "Marty."



# The Everyman

DILYS POWELL

A FEW months ago the Everyman Cinema at Hampstead celebrated its twenty-first birthday; I have known the place, not indeed since its infancy, but certainly since its childhood. In the first half of the 'thirties I spent much of my life abroad. I could never keep pace with the cinema in those days; as a matter of fact it was only quite lately that I could feel I had caught up with the films I had missed. But in 1937 I was settled in London. Let's go to the Hampstead Everyman, a friend said one evening—they're showing some sort of surrealist film; it might be amusing. I had not yet acquired the voracious appetite for films of all shapes and breeds which I have now. I went with misgiving; I came out bewildered and excited. The "surrealist" film was like nothing I had seen before; I felt obscurely that it was leading the cinema into strange and splendid territory. It was called *Zéro de Conduite*.

My first meeting with the Everyman encouraged me to seek fresh encounters. Elsewhere I had, of course, looked at the Continental films which we all saw in the late 'twenties and early 'thirties: the Stygian German pieces at the old Shaftesbury Avenue Pavilion, a few of the Russian revolutionaries, the Lilian Harvey musicals, the miraculous René Clair comedies (the Everyman, by the way, opened with *Le Million*). But at Hampstead one could make acquaintance with a much wider range of cinema: American and British as well as French, Austrian and Czech, and Scandinavian as well as German and Russian. The Everyman was not primarily concerned to bring new films to this country. Its job was that of a film society whose members were the ordinary public: sometimes it introduced, but most often it recaptured—the film one had missed, the film one had to see. There are other repertory cinemas, and many of them have done great service. I don't believe any of them have pursued the policy of the second chance quite as effectively as the Everyman.

Yet if I were asked what I most admired I think I should begin with the seasons. To see an isolated work by a director or a player is all very well. The Everyman has frequently offered a group of works—a venture to be expected, perhaps, of a film society, but in the case of a public cinema audacious to the point of extravagance. Already in 1934 Jim Fairfax-Jones was arranging seasons of René Clair and Alfred Hitchcock, followed presently by Pabst, Fritz Lang, Lubitsch, Capra, and Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. I know a man who used to say he would like to own a cinema so that he could put on the Marx Brothers films over and over again, as the Old Vic puts on the works of Shakespeare. He could have had his fun almost as plentifully at the Everyman, which year after year has given us a season of the Brothers. Interesting, by the way, to note the newcomers to the



"Le Million," with which the Everyman Cinema opened.

honours list; since the war the seasons have included Preston Sturges and Jean Cocteau.

After the seasons, the series. The Pagnol trilogy, *Marius*, *Fanny* and *César*, has often been shown in its fragments; the Everyman gives us all three pieces in their right order. Again with the Gorki trilogy of Mark Donskoi: last year the Everyman succeeded in capturing the elusive middle piece, *My Apprenticeship*, never before shown in England, and presented the work complete. Its treatment of the silent cinema also has been exemplary. I have seen *The Birth of a Nation* turned into a riotous Keystone comedy by being projected at sound speed. The Everyman has never allowed the early masterpieces to be insulted; if you see *Intolerance* or *Caligari* in Hampstead it will be shown as it should be shown.

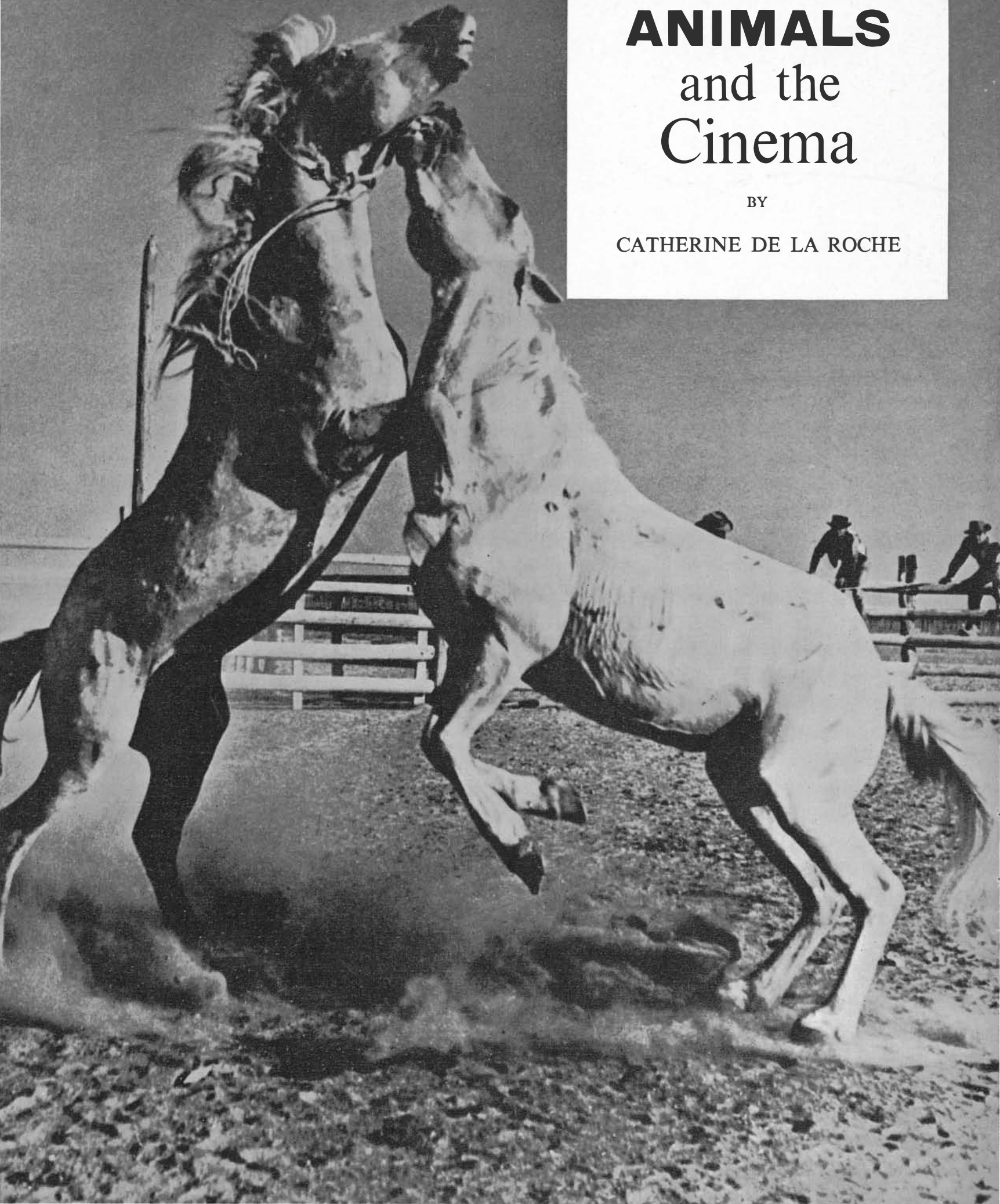
One of the parlour games enjoyed by the film addict is list-making: the best of the year, or sometimes quite simply the best. Jim Fairfax-Jones's programmes at the Everyman since 1933 are in themselves a list of favourites. Not, I am thankful to say, an altogether earnest list: it isn't all Potemkins, it has room for the enchanting *Monsieur Hulot's Holiday*, for *Three-Cornered Moon* and even *Aan*. The Everyman has been run by people who like the cinema instead of regarding it as purely a business or a duty. And yet there has been a deep sense of responsibility in its management. Among the grand, the famous films there are a good many which will always bring in an audience. There are also a few against which, unaccountably, all but a handful of devotees will set their faces: the austere films such as *Diary of a Country Priest*, the difficult poetic films such as *Zéro de Conduite* and *L'Atalante*. The Everyman, at whatever risk, stubbornly insists on these. For this act of faith alone the cinema and all who care for it have reason to be grateful.



# **ANIMALS** and the Cinema

BY

CATHERINE DE LA ROCHE







"The Vanishing Prairie": coyote trying to encircle prairie dog.

FOR as long as cinema has existed, animals have appeared on the screen. Their appeal in feature films was immediately obvious to producers, while the possibilities of a movie camera soon became apparent to explorers. In fiction films the presentation of animals has varied little through the years. With some notable exceptions, they have been shown in the traditional way, that is, from the point of view of human beings. If there is any change, it is part of the general increase in violence: bullfighting films, for instance, are more fashionable than they have ever been. In documentaries, on the other hand, progress has been enormous, especially recently. This is partly due to technical developments—micro- and tele-photography, the magnetophone, etc.—which have facilitated filming in wild country. But the main reason is the new approach of a few pioneers who seek to understand the animals' point of view and to present their true personalities.

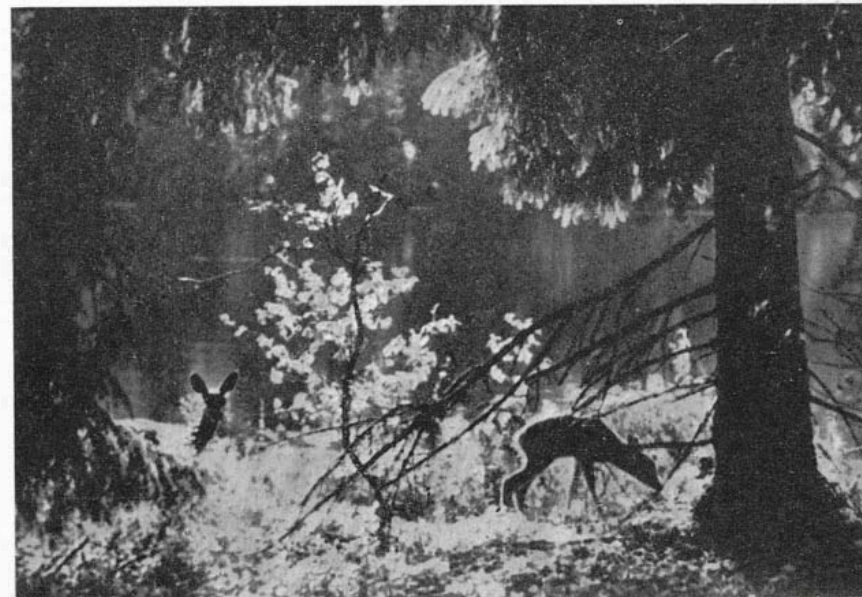
### Fiction

Of all those shown in fiction films, dogs seem to be the least misunderstood. It is not for nothing that, having lived with human beings since prehistoric times, and probably the first to have been domesticated, they can apparently be content in their dependence on and obedience to man. Certainly on the screen most of them demonstrate not only affection, intelligence, courage and skill, but also a certain enjoyment of their roles, which have covered a vast range. Already in 1905 *Rescued by Rover*, with its shaggy hero, had indicated the unique possibilities of cinema for portraying his kind. Then the beautiful Alsations impersonating Rin-Tin-Tin, famous canine star of silent films, and the engaging collies, who, as Lassie and her son, are memorable above all for their friendships with children, showed in simple terms how great a dog's prowess and versatility can be. Countless small-part dogs, like the gay little terrier Asta in *The Thin Man* series, have, without doing anything much, always been inveterate scene-stealers. But not all of them. There are the tragic figures, such as the emaciated mongrel, tied to a handcart

and stoned, in *Le Salaire de la Peur*. Others, like Anna Magnani's dachshund in *We the Women*, are merely dragged about as if they were inanimate objects.

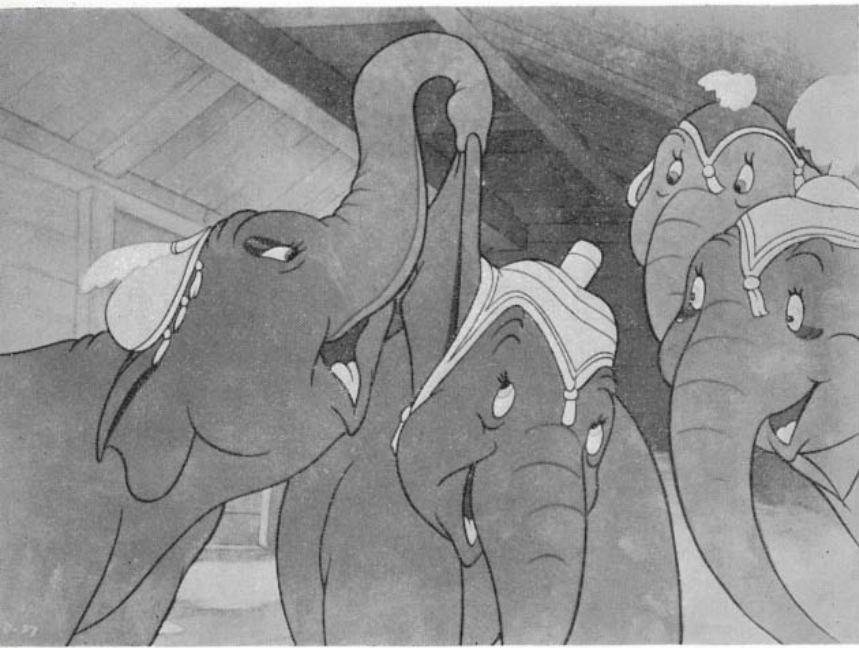
This is the treatment most often inflicted on cats, who hardly ever look happy on the screen. The white Persian in Stroheim's *Queen Kelly* is a classic example; like all those pulled around by glamorous women for ornamental effect, he was, in fact, a picture of misery. Doubtless because of superstition, many are presented as sinister figures. Cats have long been used, as Walt Disney notes in Robert Feild's book on his art, "to symbolise evil," and nowhere, of course, more persistently than in animated cartoons, whether by his own or other companies. Only once to my knowledge, in *Rhubarb*, has a cat had to play a leading role. This involved being trapped in nets, chased by dogs, swung on chandeliers, tied up, caged, dragged into roaring crowds. The camera faithfully recorded the expression in his eyes and, as any ailurophile would have expected, it was at variance with the picture's comic purpose. (The same director, Arthur Lubin, was also responsible for *Francis*, the "talking mule" and its sequels, in which this animal was made to "salute" by having his tail jerked up, and suffer similar indignities.) Alone among domestic animals to have retained their spirit of independence, cats do not willingly submit or enjoy performing. It is as useless as it is unkind to subject them to studio discipline. The only way, I am convinced, to get satisfactory portrayals, showing their intelligence, delicacy and dignity, is to film them like wild animals in documentary, that is, in familiar, congenial surrounding and with sympathetic understanding.

Horses must have rendered greater service to the cinema than any other animals. As a rule they appear simply as beasts of burden, the treatment varying only with the quality of the photography and horsemanship. In Westerns rough-riding is naturally common, and close-ups of stark-eyed horses, their jaws forced apart by violent reining-in, have become so familiar that nobody, apparently, thinks anything of them. There have always been a few performing horses who assume roles, like Roy Rogers' Trigger, and, also, many films specifically about horses, such as *Black Beauty*, *National Velvet*, *Smoky*, *Stallion Road*, *Gypsy Colt*, in which the horse is usually a boy's devoted friend and wins a race. A few, however, including one of the Flicka films, in which a daring wild stallion releases a ranch mare and joyously careers with her into open



Sucksdorff's "Dawn."





"Dumbo": humanised clowns

country, have revealed incidentally that horses can crave for freedom and glory in it. The Spanish film, Edgar Neville's *The Last Horse*, was a sincere, if inexpert, attempt to show, through a satire on motorisation, that nowadays the only fate for unwanted horses in Spain is the horror of the bullring; memorable, too, was *Crin Blanc*, Albert Lamorisse's beautiful and poetic story of a wild stallion in the Camargue and the boy who protects his freedom until they both perish in a brave endeavour to escape capture.

All kinds of wild beasts appear in features, but normally in only two kinds of roles: horrific or spectacular. In big-game-hunting films any creature killed by the stars is described as "man-eating" or "marauding" and usually belongs to the feline species. That in reality unprovoked lions and tigers are much less aggressive than they are supposed to be in fiction makes no difference—it is their job to terrify. In melodramas such as *Elephant Walk*, the animals merely provide spectacular interludes and are induced to behave in or out of character according to the requirements of a story not their own.\* Some pictures, admittedly, like *Gone to Earth* with its fox-hunting scenes, do try to penetrate the animals' point of view, while one brief sequence in Jean Renoir's masterpiece *La Règle du Jeu* showed the whole truth, without over-emphasis or sentimentality, about the quarries' plight in an organised shoot with beaters. There were, too, moments of happier revelation in the Zoltan Korda-Flaherty *Elephant Boy*, notably when a herd of wild elephants "dance" in the shallows of a river; and *Where No Vultures Fly*, describing the creation of Kenya's National Parks, showed a variety of beasts in their native habitat. Disney's *Bambi* was a portrait from life, the fawn's manner and movements beautifully studied, and the fawn in *The Yearling*, understood as deeply as he is loved by a small farmboy, remains one of the cinema's most touching animal heroes. But all these are exceptions.

In its presentation of trick-performing animals (and not

\* It was reported, incidentally, that during the shooting of this film the elephants declined to knock and trample down the house sufficiently in their stampede sequence, and artificial inserts of destructive tusks had to be used.

only in this), the cinema has adopted circus conventions, adding nothing new. Numerous circus films have been made; the acts have been resourcefully photographed, and close-ups are sometimes revealing to those who can read an animal's expression. Circus life and its background has been variously dramatised, but the screenplays are devoted to the human performers and the beasts, even if treated with a certain affection, are subordinate in every sense. Disney's *Dumbo* was no exception: a very human clown in disguise, he was so anthropomorphised that the issue of a performing elephant's life did not arise. This is broadly true of all Disney's cartoon animal creatures; by imposing human characteristics and situations on them, he and his imitators have denied their essential animal personalities. Interestingly enough, this cartoon point of view at first distorted the material of the "True Life Adventure" series, in which trick cutting and musical accompaniment merely served to make nature imitate the cartoon. Parts of *The Living Desert* turned nature into a circus and its animals into performers. (In *Bar Sinister*, by the way, we will see dogs representing human types—a schnauzer impersonates a suave man-about-town and a white poodle plays a blonde cutie.) Quite a number of the movies contrived for sensation are inordinately violent and cruel in effect, though the letter of the law may have been observed during production. In *Mighty Joe Young*, for instance, tigers were hurled on to broken glass (plastic, no doubt) and a gorilla made to climb into a burning house. Animals have, of course, also served their stint in sensational and other kinds of publicity. Posters with rearing horses and snarling lions advertise every other action film. In Hollywood animal performers compete for the annual Patsy Awards and get involved in the attending ballyhoo. Trappers (some of whom significantly prefer to be called "animal collectors") constantly present all sorts of cubs to film stars who seldom know where or how to keep them—but it makes a news item, and the resulting publicity photographs are often bizarre.

### Reality

Though the difference between fact and fiction in the cinema varies considerably in degree, it is certainly marked where animals are involved, including those in captivity. Certain aspects of the breeding, training and study of these animals have, of course, been recorded in scientific and instructional films for specialists, which are outside the scope of this article, and also in documentaries for the general public. But these, for obvious reasons, are limited in range. Films such as *The Story of a Saker Falcon*, made in Hungary by Dr. Homoki-Nagy and showing every stage, with brilliantly detailed observation, in the relentless, stupefying process whereby the bird is dispirited and transformed into an instrument of human will, may not appeal to everybody. Some may prefer a modest picture like *The Boy and the Eagle*, in which an injured bird is trained to fly again and then set free. Films with spectacular action, on the other hand—especially bronco-busting—are both popular and numerous. Nor do they all reveal gratuitous violence. *Corral*, about the breaking-in of a colt on a Canadian ranch, is an example of those distinguished by sensitive horsemanship; and so, in an exceptional way, is a film in *The World of Life* series showing how Mrs. Barbara Woodhouse masters a horse, not by force with a lasso, but gently, breathing nose-to-nose with him for a moment, like animals making acquaintance, and thus gaining his confidence—a method learned by her from a South American gaucho.

The documentaries on animals in industry and agriculture are also limited in range, but some have attained particularly high standards, above all George Hoellering's



*Hortobagy*, a lyrical, sensuous film about the herdsmen in the Hungarian plain and their magnificent horses. One of the best in S. Nolbandov's *This Modern Age* series was *Antarctic Whale Hunt*, which posed the question of finding a more humane method of killing. Harry Watt's *The Overlanders*, though technically a feature, belongs to the documentary tradition of which he was a pioneer, and revealed what the wartime cattle trek in Australia had meant for man and beast; and, for those who can bear to look, Georges Franju's *Le Sang des Bêtes*, records, without evasions or sensationalism, the daily routine in a slaughter house.

Caged animals are constantly being filmed, but the pictures show little except their physical attributes, feeding time, cubs at play and, occasionally, the desperation or apathy of the felines. Zoo films are singularly unrevealing, and only exceptional pictures on other subjects ever suggest what a captive animal's position may be like: Lindsay Anderson's 16 mm. short, *O Dreamland*, for instance. A survey of a funfair, made with an unflinching eye, it records the morbid sideshows watched by children, the ecstatic teen-agers listening to a crooner's amplified voice—the whole medley of crude mechanical entertainment and its impact on the crowd. One incidental shot suffices to show, by contrast, the sad dignity of a tiger behind bars. Unlike the zoo films, those dealing with animals held in partial or temporary confinement for observation do reveal certain aspects of their natural behaviour—they are made for this purpose. In *The World of Life* series, for example, a reportage on Professor Konrad Lorenz's bird sanctuary in Germany gives a glimpse of the courage and shrewdness of ducks and the habits of other inmates, while a few documentaries on insects, notably *Sunny Tribe*, a long-term study of bees made by A. Vinnitsky in the U.S.S.R., have minutely recorded their life-cycle and social organisation.

But the really penetrating portrayals of animals appear in the films made in wild country. Not only because animals are more self-revealing when leading their own lives: their native habitat and all the wonders in it have attracted a few men endowed with humility and a passion for discovery. At best these pictures have also extended the scope of cinema as an art. If the technicians in studios are often content to ignore new inventions, the man in the wilds, on the alert to capture fleeting moments of truth in every kind of light, climate and situation, has always searched for better tools and often demonstrated how they should be used. Many documentaries could not have been made without photographic virtuosity, and Arne Sucksdorff's *The Great Adventure* has proved that virtuosity in sound recording can be equally vital.

The makers of wild life films have helped to develop the cinema because what they want to say can often only be expressed by new methods. During the first four decades of the cinema's existence they made gradual progress, becoming more adventurous, more perceptive. But until the last war, however admirable some of their pictures (like the best in the *Secrets of Life* series) may have been, they showed little more than brief episodes in an animal's life, or particular and more or less superficial aspects of it. Since the 1940's, however, there has been a greatly increased exploration of this field. Production of popular scientific films had been intensified in the Soviet Union just before the war, and early in the 1940's A. Zguridi completed *In the Sands of Central Asia*, a feature-length survey of animal and insect life in the Kara-Kum Desert, impressive above all for the unity of its composition. About the same time B. Dolin made the first of his full-length story films about individual animals, *The Law of Great Love*. Starting when a dogfox, living

in a forest in central Russia, digs the hole in which the vixen will give birth to the cubs, he traces their adventures through the changing seasons until one of the cubs prepares for parenthood in his turn. In *Animal Paths* Dolin revealed a more complex way of life; here his heroes are a herd of goats inhabiting the mountains of Kirghizia and led by the strongest ram from the autumn till spring, when the most experienced she-goat takes over leadership. Both these pictures show an orphaned suckling being lovingly reared by a foster-mother. In *The Story of a Ring* Dolin illustrates the life of migratory birds through the story of a family of storks in Ukraine, once again indicating that among many animals a father's love is as great as a mother's. Dolin's films have a scientist's objectivity and also much warmth and charm. Above all his animals are distinguished one from another by their personalities.

Meanwhile Sucksdorff in Sweden was developing his own exceedingly personal, intimate and poetic style of portraying animals in their natural surroundings. All his films have a theme: the defencelessness of the weak in *Cliff Face*, which shows a community of guillemots on a Baltic island falling victim to the stronger gulls; the eternal conflict between beauty and cruelty in the lives of all the creatures of the forest in *A Divided World*, which is, in a way, a parable on human society. And in *The Great Adventure*, his first full-length film, he tells of a most moving friendship between the farm children living near a forest and two of its denizens—an otter and a fox.

Some excellent animal films have been produced in Hungary in recent years, notably Dr. Homoki-Nagy's *From Blossom Time to Autumn. Frost*. A record of the struggle for survival among the various beasts and birds on a large reservation, it is serious, objective and simple in style. Walt Disney's *True Life Adventure* series is very different. The material recorded is superb, but much of it is skillfully manipulated for artificial effects. In *Beaver Valley* frogs croak to music; in *The Living Desert* the antics of scorpions are synchronised with a square dance tune; and the commentaries, composed in human terms, are not always faithful to the action. As in his animated cartoons, mice, where possible, are the stars—and they prove worthy of the honour; in *The Living Desert* the pocket mice defying a rattlesnake are splendid, but, true to the same cartoon tradition, no doubt, a beautiful bobcat is unsympathetically treated. In contrast *The Vanishing Prairie* presents its excellent material simply and with understanding. And I take particular pleasure in recording that in this picture Disney has made amends to cats. The enchanting sequence showing a mountain lioness with her two cubs, their grace, intelligence and unaggressive nature, is the best screen portrayal of felines I have seen.



"Rhubarb"



# CANNES

## 1955

LINDSAY ANDERSON

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"A Tale from Chikamatsu."

Writing about festivals is a problem. As every critic knows, nothing is harder than to communicate the quality, the precise feel of films that one's readers have never heard of—and may never have a chance to see. "I read your article," people say. "Very interesting. What were the films *really* like?"

What was Cannes 1955 *really* like? First of all a rich festival, with a good many interesting, stimulating pictures. Much promise, if few revelations. The general impression is still of an interim period, with our few Masters scattered about the world in lonely eminence. And the march of Progress goes on: colour—panoramic screens—stereophonic sound. . . .

It is a march that woefully few artists dare publicly to question. Asked (as was inevitable at every Cannes Press conference) what they think about CinemaScope, they shift uneasily and reply that it is right for certain kinds of subject. But in private some of them are franker. Gene Kelly admitted that he found the system unsuitable for musicals, ugly for dancing. "You want to do a *pas de deux* and you find yourselves in an acre of empty space . . . Widescreen, yes; but CinemaScope, no. And now there's the business of trying to compose for all proportions of screen at the same time. Directors just aren't in control." From Russia, Serge Youtkevitch said much the same. "In so far as all these developments extend the creative possibilities of cinema, of course we much welcome them. But they must not be imposed on directors regardless of their fitness to subject. The same is true of colour. We still make black-and-white films in Russia; and we are going to try to make more. I've been asked if I want CinemaScope for the *Othello* which I am going to make next. I've said no. On the other hand, for a big, fresco-style film like my *Scander-Beg*, it might have been interesting." "But do you really think," I asked, "that the æsthetic effect—as distinct from the purely sensational effect—of CinemaScope, in even a subject like that is likely to be greater?" Youtkevitch thought, smiled, and shook his head. "No—not really."\*

Were some feelings of this kind responsible for the jury's award of the Grand Prix to the little, unpretentious, black-and-white *Marty*? And the first prize for shorts which went to Norman McLaren's brilliant, idiosyncratic *Blinkety Blank*? Here were two merited victories for the artist's cinema, unswamped by apparatus. *Marty's* American rival, Kazan's CinemaScope *East of Eden*, only strengthened one's suspicion of panoramic drama: the more the medium is "used," the more essential conflict there must be between the spectacular and the dramatic. Of course if there are no genuine dramatic qualities, CinemaScope can give a passable illusion of solidity to a film—e.g. *Bad Day at Black Rock*, which was surprisingly well received at the festival.

But the proper function of the panoramic screen was pointed at Cannes by its more successful use in documentaries. (Or at least in films that are conventionally classed as "documentaries.") The American short on Tuna-fishing (produced by Fox) could not have been more banal in its human observation; but its wide and colourful vistas of tuna-infested ocean, the row of fishermen ceaselessly whipping the fish through the air to land gasping on the deck of their boat, with the vividness of stereophonic sound to replace the subtler rhythms of a cutting-pattern

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\* It is interesting that such misgivings are felt not only by established directors. J. A. Bardem, the very promising young Spanish director of *Comicos*, who served on the jury this year, expressed himself decisively. "Sound, colour, even 3-D are real expressive extensions of the cinema. CinemaScope—the panoramic screen generally—is an arbitrary development, æsthetically speaking, imposed on us from outside. The true revolution has been caused by the other innovations—they've made the old grammar out of date. We've got to invent a new language, unfortunately, before the old one had by any means fully developed. As for CinemaScope—the only ray of hope is that most European producers won't be able to afford it. I certainly prefer the ordinary screen." Bardem's latest film, *Death of a Cyclist*, was shown extra-festival at Cannes with great success, and shared this year's critics' prize with *Raices*.



—these scenes certainly achieved a style of their own. The Italian Cinépanoramique short *Island of Fire* had some well-composed, dramatically effective sketches of peasant life on Aetna, including some impressive shots of eruption; and the long Italian exploration film, *Lost Continent*, though rightly jeered for one inexcusable error of taste, otherwise earned repeated volleys of applause for its striking CinemaScope scenes of life on the Chinese and Malayan islands. Made by a group of five Italian directors working under Leonardo Bonzi (who was responsible for last year's *Magia Verde*), and including Enrico Gras, *Lost Continent* achieves at times a style distinctly beyond that of a succession of spectacular *camera obscura* views. But it is at best a rhetorical style; journalistic rather than poetic. Size counts. The thing is simply too big for intimacy.

Perhaps significantly, the best national contribution at Cannes came from the cinema whose cultural tradition seems at the moment the purest, most cultivated in the world. Equally significantly, none of these Japanese entries figured in the list of awards. Yet *A Tale from Chikamatsu*, by Kenzo Mizoguchi, was the one film at the festival that had the absolute distinction of style that marked it as the work of a master-director. Films by Mizoguchi have been seen at other European festivals, but none has yet reached Britain, and it is difficult to convey his quality to those whose idea of the Japanese cinema has been formed by the Kurosawa of *Rashomon* and *Seven Samurai*. *A Tale from Chikamatsu*, a tragic love story set in sixteenth century Japan, is nearer in feeling to *Gate of Hell*; but a *Gate of Hell* still further refined, shorn of its decorative trappings (Mizoguchi's film is in black-and-white), more austere in technique (there is not a single close-up in the picture), with an altogether classical restraint, with which goes a classical, sublime intensity. This intensity was lacking in *Princess Sen*, another historical tragedy, this time in EastmanColour. Without being as unfailingly felicitous as *Gate of Hell*, *Princess Sen* is still a civilised, immensely satisfying entertainment. The third Japanese entry, *Five Sisters*, proved little more than a good-class commercial film—magazine story level, but of distinct charm, and continually interesting for its pleasant glimpses of contemporary middle-class life.

In comparison with the Japanese films, it must be admitted that most Western film-making seems the work of a band of more or less adept vulgarians. The American contribution, stronger on paper than on the screen, had mostly been seen in this country: its two new offerings, *Marty* and *East of Eden*, are reviewed elsewhere in this issue. It is unnecessary to say more here than that, if the award of the Grand Prix to *Marty* over the head of *Chikamatsu* was absurd, the American film nevertheless remains one of the most likeable, honourable and praise-



"La Route Sanglante." Milan Milosevic as the young Yugoslav fugitive from a German concentration camp in Norway.

worthy in the festival. Britain did not shine: *The End of the Affair* and *A Kid for Two Farthings*. (In passing, it may be regretted that the continued ban on the festival by the British Film Producers Association prevented the showing of a film as respectable as *The Dam Busters*—which would almost certainly have been prized.) A more successful childhood fable was the Spanish *Marcellino Pane e Vino* (directed by Ladislav Vajda); the miraculous climax of this, in which a six-year-old orphan is taken into the arms of Jesus, is rather dubiously edifying, but the story that leads up to it is told with a genial and unforced charm, and most winningly played by its small star. The Germans, alas, were as German as ever—chiefly an ornate, ponderous *Ludwig II* by Kautner, which turned out rather surprisingly to have been photographed by Douglas Slocombe. France submitted a new social melodrama by Cayatte, *Le Dossier Noir*, even more muddled and heavy-handed than its predecessors. More interesting was *Du Rififi Chez les Hommes*, made in France by Jules Dassin after four years of enforced inactivity. This accomplished thriller, with its central twenty-minute setpiece of a robbery staged with a documentary wealth of detail and without a word of dialogue, shows that Dassin has lost none of his incisive skill; but the film is chiefly to be welcomed as an opportunity for its director to re-establish himself, and to get to work now on projects that may be nearer to his heart.

From Italy the most eagerly-awaited contribution was of course the new De Sica-Zavattini *Oro di Napoli*. This proved disappointing—at least to those who were hoping for a return by the team to their pre-*Indiscretion* style. The film (in the full version shown at Cannes) consists of six episodes of Neapolitan life, adapted from stories by

The story of a child's funeral, one of the six sketches in de Sica's "*Oro di Napoli*."





Giuseppe Marotta. The material is promising: the stories are rich in their elemental themes of love, humour and death, and much of the realisation is inventive, full of zestful, ironic detail. Yet there remains something exterior, and even patronising, about the film; it is heavy with stars, finally uneasy in its compromise between art and commerce.

## 2

We have had disquieting news lately of the pressures under which serious Italian film-makers now have to work; and no doubt *Oro di Napoli* is at least partly the result of the unsympathetic attitude of their government towards De Sica's and Zavattini's real social sympathies. Conversely, films from the East showed the strength rather than the weakness of a film industry working in complete accord with official policy. *Heroes of Chipka*, directed by the veteran Vassiliev, would make any Hollywood producer of spectacle green with despair: whole armies deploy magnificently in front of the camera, through the mountains and valleys of Bulgaria, re-enacting the Russo-Bulgarian campaign against the Turks in 1877-8. The scenario has little sense of construction, and the overall design (constantly interrupted by static and tendentious scenes of diplomatic intrigue in Western capitals) is very faulty. But the main action scenes have a grandeur, and from time to time a human liveliness, that is irresistible. One fact is certain: if *War and Peace* is ever worthily to be filmed, only the Russians can do it.

From a spectacular point of view, the Russian ballet-film of *Romeo and Juliet* is less successful: too much of it is simply dowdy. But some of the direction—and the dancing—has splendid vigour and precision; and the poetry of Ulanova's interpretation of Juliet is in itself ample justification for the film. The only contemporary feature from Russia, *A Great Family*, was an agreeable, leisurely chronicle of life in a family of Kiev shipbuilders: the old grandfather who becomes too old to work in the yards; the designer who neglects his wife for his work; the boy who falls in love. . . . Social responsibilities are, of course, not forgotten—the point is sometimes rather laboured—but there is a generally relaxed note to the film that is perhaps evidence of a more humane, less nervously propagandist trend in Russian cinema. The neglected wife leaves her husband; returns one day, out of the blue, to see him; they talk. . . . But it won't work, and she goes on her way alone. There are no recriminations, and no moralising in this sad, sensitively handled little episode. It is good to find once again in a Russian film this willingness to admit that all is not always for the best, in this best of all possible worlds.

## 3

Awards, we all know, are nonsense. If good films manage to get them—so much the better: but at festivals,

the prizes are bound to be distributed with a heavy political bias. That is part of the price we have to pay for having them at all. Nevertheless, it was particularly disappointing that at Cannes this year all the spoils went to the big battalions; for one of the most encouraging features of the festival was the liveliness, the almost defiant vitality shown by the smaller film-producing nations. Lack of resources, lack of experience: one or the other, or both of these were evident in the entries from Israel, Greece, Yugoslavia, India, Mexico. . . . Yet these are just the deficiencies that prove immaterial. Happily, London showings are assured for at least two of these—*Hill 24 Does Not Answer*, directed by Thorold Dickinson for an Israel production company; and *Stella*, the second film of Michael Yannis, the young Greek director of *Windfall in Athens*. Both these are vibrantly national productions: the Israeli film with three stories set in their war for independence, each inspired by the common, passionate will towards freedom and nationhood. Independence is also the theme of *Stella*—in this case a craving for personal independence which is the ruin of its heady, temperamental heroine. Yannis' style is less mature than Dickinson's and there are times when he is apt to overplay his hand; but the full-blooded gusto of his film is extremely engaging.

There remain three productions which must be noted. From India, *Boot Polish*, a sort of sentimental neo-realist story of orphan children in the slums of a big Indian city: less successful than *Two Acres of Land*, but vivid, wholehearted, continuously alive. The Mexican *Roots*—four stories of Mexican Indians, made by an independent unit subscribing to allegiances very different from those of Fernandez and Figueroa—is less crude and sentimental: again a fierce national feeling; a strong, poetic irony; and, above all, an intransigent love for the oppressed people who are its subject. This film should certainly be brought to London.

And London should see, too, *La Route Sanglante*, the wartime story of a Nazi concentration camp for Yugoslav partisans in Norway, made in co-production by a Yugoslav and a Norwegian company. There was a good deal of war at Cannes; much blood was spilt on the screen of the Palais des Festivals in the name of national pride and independence; and one responded the more deeply gratefully to a film whose values were pacific. Such are the values of *La Route Sanglante*. The slow movement of the film is the mark of its sincerity: the horrors of the camp are flatly, not dramatically, presented, and the dignity of the prisoners, and of the Norwegians who help them, is unconscious, unassumed, innate. Films like these, of such dogged integrity, restore one's faith.

How can the cinema ever be "finished"? What nonsense we are sometimes driven to talk!



# Fifty Years of Film

*In this series of repertory programmes every Thursday and Friday at the National Film Theatre, a number of rarely seen old films are included as well as the established classics. In the last few months, two films—Piscator's *Revolt of the Fishermen* and Machaty's *Erotikon*—received their first showings in this country, and Molander's *En Natt* was revived for the first time in twenty-four years. From time to time, as such little-known films appear, individual critics will give an appreciation of them in SIGHT AND SOUND.*

## REVOLT OF THE FISHERMEN

Last year, in Brussels, I saw Erwin Piscator's *Revolt of the Fishermen*, which he made in the U.S.S.R. in 1934, and was struck by its power and vitality. The Belgian Cinemathèque kindly agreed to lend us their copy to show at the National Film Theatre on April 28th, 1955. We were thus able to introduce to English students a film which, though mentioned in the film histories, had never before been shown here (in some countries it had been banned); and this second viewing enabled me to temper the first enthusiasm of discovery.

The story (taken from a novel of the same name by Anna Seghers) is that of a conflict between fishermen on strike and the blacklegs brought in from a neighbouring village by the bosses to replace them. One of the strikers (Kederneck) is killed, and at his funeral his widow and the other mourners, incensed by the graveyard speech of the priest (acting on the side of authority), break out into bloody revolt against the soldiers who have been marshalled to keep order. Two of the chief characters are a young sailor, Andreas, who joins the blacklegs in order to wreck their ship with dynamite, and the girl he wants to marry, who earns her living (with some zest, although she is presented as the victim of social conditions) as a prostitute.

Power and vitality this minor masterpiece certainly has, but it is the vitality of a brilliant bravura exercise on classical styles. I cannot remember any film more derivative. Time and time again one is prompted to think, not of the film itself, but of some other film (nearly always German or Russian) which for the moment it resembles. Shots through glass doors, reflections in a mirror, swinging camera shots in a fairground scene, low-key lighting, the earthy prostitutes, the brooding Andreas, all from the German silent cinema; and from the



Czechoslovakia, 1928 : Ita Rina in Machaty's "*Erotikon*".

Soviet, the shock effects obtained by editing, and the echoes of *Potemkin*, from the repeated shots of ships in the mist to even certain resemblances in narrative structure. To a studious absorption of Pabst and Pudovkin, Piscator has added his own experience from the stage, and although the action is in naturalistic settings, the groupings and movements of the characters, especially in mass, are theatrical in conception; sometimes the crowds even break into choral singing, leading one critic of the time to call it a film oratorio.

All the performances are good, that of Emma Tzessarskaya as the prostitute being outstanding. By extending the principle of stage ramps into the open air, Piscator obtains some striking crowd groupings, particularly in the funeral procession, which appears as though it may have been the model for Malraux's equally impressive procession in *Espoir*. The sequences of the funeral and the subsequent revolt are, indeed, the best in the film; amid the angry political conflict which is provoked by the priest, the distraught widow lies stretched across the coffin, when suddenly the explosion of Andreas's bomb is heard across the water; the crowd break away to hurl themselves on the troops, tearing off their black coats and top hats as they go, Kederneck's deserted coffin falls into the grave and splits open, his body symbolically thrusting out, and the widow in fury seizes an armed soldier and beats him to death.

Although this violence reaches its peak in the climax, it runs as an undercurrent throughout the film as a whole. It is partly because the same note is sustained continuously, without any real variation, and partly because it is maintained by the assiduous application of techniques, that the predominant impression, behind the power and the vitality, is that of hysteria. "The fault in the film," as was so perceptively noted in the programme note put out by the Belgian Cinemathèque, "resides in the fact that it is a mongrel production of a popular tragedy adapted without passion, and of a passionately fervent conception of visual effects to which the tragedy must give way." It deserves its place, none the less, as a serious and important work.

ERNEST LINDGREN.

## EROTIKON

I remember going to see, about twelve years ago, Gustav Machaty's *Extase* at a cinema in the Tottenham Court Road, where it was being shown by special L.C.C. licence. The audience was large, raffish and impatient. Unfortunately the copy was a very old one, and broke four times before we reached the celebrated nude scene; by the fourth time, the whole auditorium was tense with frustrated expectation. Whistles, catcalls, stamping feet, giggles, claps—a few even got up and walked about nervously, smoking or eating. When the scene at last came, it was evidently too brief and too unstressed for the general taste. Anticipation now appeared thoroughly cheated, there were distinct groans and mutters of outrage, most people lost interest in the film, and someone complained: "She was standing in the water most of the

U.S.S.R., 1934 : the funeral sequence from Piscator's "*Revolt of the Fishermen*".





Sweden, 1930 : Molander's "En natt".

time. . . ."

In fact *Extase*, like *Erotikon*, is far from being a sensational film. Machaty's reputation as a maker of sex-dramas is misleading; in spite of the fact that he was von Stroheim's assistant on *Foolish Wives*, his talent is tenuous, gentle and oblique. *Erotikon* (1928), like the later film, has the simplest of plots, of which the contrivances and coincidences form its least satisfactory part, and its emphasis is all on mood, atmosphere, the moment. The lovers' world seems isolated from everything else and enveloped in its own allusive, poetic halo—the first softly textured image of the man running through the rain at night sets the tone—and the early part of the film has a rapt, entranced quality that is very personal. Ita, the village girl, is seduced by Georges, a stranger from the city; he goes away; she is lonely; she has a child. In these passages the rhythm has a slow languor, there are many long-held and delicately diffused close-ups, and occasionally bold startling compositions for dramatic effect—the servant outside the room where the child is being born, sipping her mug of tea, her shadow falling heavily across the wall—and the natural atmosphere has a lyrical, nostalgic quality: rain steadily pouring down outside while Georges makes love to Ita, the dawn breaking, the train steaming away through the bleak, stripped countryside.

In the later part, as in *Extase*, the style wavers between a similar poetry of mood and some sharp social comedy. The triangle situation—Ita marries, goes to live in the city, but meets Georges again and is once more attracted to him—is something that Machaty likes to explore from all kinds of concealed angles, probing the tensions beneath a particular occasion, like the game of chess between husband and lover, which Ita watches and secretly suggests the winning moves to Georges. Again, from the jealousies of Georges' discarded mistress, herself deceiving an absurd, stout, bespectacled husband, Machaty extracts some ironic humour, and the scene in which both couples and Georges are encountered on the same dance floor provides an admirable comedy of manners. But these transitions break the unity of the film, and Machaty's moment-by-moment technique of building up a story, of which the numerous coincidences need rather more preparation to become acceptable, weakens the line of psychological development.

Perhaps it is not surprising that Machaty's talent failed to develop for long in the sound period. (*Extase* belongs to that interesting hybrid moment when a number of directors were adding sound—mainly effects and music, with a minimum of dialogue—to a narrative still conceived in silent style. *En Natt* is another example.) *Erotikon* suggests that this kind of

dramatic impressionism could never happily have submitted to more rigorous demands of construction and form, let alone of naturalism. Machaty is a characteristic casualty of the general streamlining of narrative in the last twenty years in the cinema. Uneven and lacking in wholeness as his films are, they have a delicacy and subtle distilled poetry that is very appealing, and one regrets the absence today of such authentically personal minor works.

GAVIN LAMBERT.

## EN NATT

It is a severe test for any film to be judged 25 years after its première, but the Swedish *En Natt* (*One Night*) survives this ordeal because it is obviously a work contrived with much love and enthusiasm. Apart from its charm and delicacy of feeling, one is startled by the technical and stylistic devices on which it draws, especially remarkable for a film of 1930, when the sound cinema was still struggling with problems of cumbersome equipment and theatrical subject matter.

The story was originally the work of Ragnar Hylten-Cavallius, and concerns the fate of two brothers; one, Armas Beckius, is in love with a peasant girl, and since he lives on the Russo-Finnish border (the period is 1917) espouses the cause of the Soviets. The other is in the regular army and eventually finds himself in charge of Armas on the night before his execution. Desperate to return to the girl Marya for his last night, Armas gives his word of honour that he will return at dawn, and this his brother accepts. The conflict between love and honour makes up the final phase of the film, and Armas is killed as he attempts to cross the border and return to the custody of his brother.

The conception of the film is dominated by a tragic young love. The haunting folk-song as the camera slowly moves across the room is rendered more eloquent and poignant by the details revealed before it comes to rest on Marya and Armas; the creaking mill-wheel, the mists of late evening and dawn, the old woman shaking flour from her voluminous skirts, the disturbed life of the forest, the merry-go-round and the gun-carriages, the sound of distant bells, the monotonous ticking of a clock, and the rich expressive images captured by the camera, all mount up to a beautifully designed and planned film which retains its impact today. *En Natt* is in fact one of the most important and inventive early sound-films. The phenomenon—for it is a phenomenon—may be partially explained by the fact that its assistant director was Gosta Hellstrom, who had previously studied the cinema in Moscow. In his first assignment with Svensk Filmindustri he found himself working with Gustav Molander on *En Natt*, and it is obvious that his enthusiasm overwhelmed the director and Ake Dahlquist, the cameraman. The impression of a dynamic creative force is all over this film, and the final editing also was largely in the hands of Hellstrom, whose early death robbed the cinema of a more than promising talent. Here the attempts to burst the chains of conventional Swedish treatment, notably in the revolution scenes, are sometimes imitative of other and superior models, but there is always a compensating vitality.

The acting is in some cases outstanding. Uno Henning as the anti-revolutionary brother and Sture Lagerwall as the batman are particularly good, and Gerda Lundequist (the Mistress of Ekeby from *Gosta Berling*) portrays the mother of the two boys with her usual strength. As the lovers, Ingert Bjuggren and Bjorn Berglund invest their roles with a sincere sense of reality and avoid the temptation to over-romanticise.

It is axiomatic that the Swedish film will have deep roots in its environment, and while we watch *En Natt* the countryside comes alive before our eyes. The mill, the forests, the rivers, the landscapes changing their character from morning to evening, play a positive and genuinely felt part. In this way most of all, perhaps, the film lives; it has a poetic feeling for permanent things, not subtle or complex, but none the less universal and valid.

LIAM O LAOGHAIRE.



# Correspondence

## New Talent

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND,

SIR,—It is a great pity that a publication which purports to be informed and is at least of some official status should make editorial statements in which relation to the facts is merely coincidental.

In "The Front Page" of your Spring 1955 issue you quite properly draw attention to the problem of the intake and development of fresh talent within the industry, but from there onwards you go all haywire. You state, the only accurate statement you do make, that out of 28 resolutions submitted for the A.C.T. Annual General Meeting in March not one was related to this problem. You imply by this statement that the matter was not on the agenda and was not discussed. In this you are completely wrong. It is reasonable to assume that the absence of a resolution was because our members knew the matter was due for discussion under the appropriate section of our Annual Report which dealt with resolutions on this problem discussed the previous year, following which we established a committee to go into the whole matter. Anyone knowledgeable of Conference procedure knows that such a reference in the report gives ample opportunity for anyone concerned to discuss the problems raised. Our Annual General Meeting was no exception, and there was discussion on the problem of new entrants.

The Report itself discloses that nearly 300 new entrants had been admitted into the Union during the year, and in accordance with the policy approved the previous year, a number of our Sections are keeping lists of potential trainees from which vacancies for which there are no available technicians have been filled. This arrangement is working satisfactorily. There is, therefore, a readiness from A.C.T. to face up to the problems involved, a readiness which does not appear to be shared by others who should be concerned in the well-being of the film industry. But, of course, we are not going to let our desire to see an expanding industry blind us to the fact that unlimited new entrants to the industry would not only be to the detriment of existing competent technicians but would open the flood gates to nepotism as has so sadly been the case in the past and also, as the past bears out, would produce a flood of new labour which would be used by the employers who were so minded to depress the rates and conditions of those earning their livelihood in the film industry.

The problem, as A.C.T. has always stressed, must therefore be an all-industry problem with the Trade Unions and Employers Federations working together with the help, where necessary, of the appropriate Government Departments.

As the records show, A.C.T. was the first film body to advocate an Apprenticeship scheme, and indeed this is on record in the columns of Hansard, when the 1937 Cinematograph Films Act was under discussion.

One of the difficulties has, of course, been the natural lack of enthusiasm both by understanding employers and the Unions to develop an Apprenticeship scheme when studio owners are closing their studios and less and less technicians are needed from month to month. But this has not been the only handicap. Employers have openly stated that they would not be a party to an Apprenticeship scheme because they were unwilling to train technicians who might eventually find their way to other employers. Some of the largest employers in the industry are also on record as refusing to co-operate with an Apprenticeship scheme because it would mean tying them to giving indentures for a long-term period such as three or five years.

If, therefore, SIGHT AND SOUND wishes to criticise it should direct its fire into the right quarters. But your Editor has really laid himself wide open in talking about young visitors who have been trying to get experience in film production. A.C.T. has always advocated that every country should have its own native film industry, and we have pressed for years for the Government, or the film industry, or the B.F.I. to do some-

thing about it. Indeed, the B.F.I. called one or two conferences which were very well attended—and the rest remains silence. The B.F.I., because of its special position in the industry, is as much responsible as anybody else and maybe more than most, for the failure to develop a proper training scheme to which overseas students would be welcome. I repeat, A.C.T. would co-operate fully in such a project. It is about time the organ of the B.F.I. stopped writing silly editorials and got down to hard, constructive work.

Yours sincerely,

G. H. ELVIN,

General Secretary,

Association of Cine-Technicians.

2 Soho Square,  
W.1.

Sir,—I greatly appreciate your concern for the Cecil B. de Milles of the future. To suggest that the British film industry is lacking in fresh young and vigorous talent is grossly misleading.

This small industry which offers fluctuating and insecure employment does already contain a great many young and possibly talented people, who struggle for nine months of the year, if they are fortunate enough to be employed for so great a period of a year, to not only learn how to make films, but also make a living at the same time.

The film industry will always have an appeal and glamour to those people who visualise a studio chair with their name on the back, materialising overnight, and write to film magazines pleading for a chance to break into films.

Almost all the great artists and technicians of today were at one time the clapper boys, the assistant directors, the assistant editors and the various other lowly assistants of the past. The junior technicians of today will be the artists of tomorrow. They are learning the only way, the art of film-making; by starting from the bottom of the ladder, by doing their jobs, by watching others do theirs, by correcting their mistakes. This is a far better way, I feel, than all the time whining about the lack of opportunity, criticising the work of those people already engaged in film-making, and talking about *Battleship Potemkin* and *Birth of a Nation* all day. . . .

Yours faithfully,

MARC HYAMS.

3 Christchurch Avenue,  
London, N.W.6.

## "Salt of the Earth," etc.

Sir,—Had I praised *Salt of the Earth* no doubt your correspondents would have considered me properly "objective" and my line of thought would not have been turned into an obstacle course. As I expressed something less than delight, Walter Lassally found that, "*Her description . . . clearly derives from the viewpoint of one who has never been in close contact with working class people.*" J. D. Corbluth thought it "*a pity that some critics are rather far away from real life and those sections of the populace who work with their hands.*"

Surely Mr. Corbluth has let the cat out of the social realist bag: manual workers are more real than other people. The callous is mightier than the pen.

The crude view of reality held by some of the correspondents is, not too surprisingly, shared by the producer and director—"we were agreed that our films must be based in actuality. . . . A true account of the miners of the South-West and their families, predominantly Mexican-Americans, begged to be told. . . . We asked the miners and their families to play themselves. . . ." etc. For social realists, artistic truth means not the artist's fidelity to his individual vision, but an approximation, a recreation of "actual" existence. (Cocteau seeks to "rehabilitate the commonplace," the social realist seeks to deify it.) The miners are not to play roles but to "play themselves." This aesthetic would take art back to before the beginnings of art: it aims, ostensibly, to reproduce the raw material from which art derives. A ludicrous aesthetic but not without a purpose: by means of it, material which is not really raw at all can be offered as more true (based in "actuality"! ) than art which is a clear and open transformation of experience. *Salt* is real to them because, they claim, it happened once; *Les Parents Terribles* is not real—though it happens forever.

Ralph Bond suggests that the method of "collective constructive criticism" means simply that you consult strikers when you are making a film about a strike—as if it were no



more than using good sense. We are all aware, or I thought we were, that artists who begin by sacrificing independent judgment in order to serve and express the masses, end up merely dramatizing political directives. What a parody of democracy the makers of *Salt* hold up for our admiration: four hundred people sit in on the script! Visualise Dreyer confronted with a committee asking for a little more earthly humor in a scene, or Cocteau trying to explain to a few hundred people why he needed the glazier in the "zone".

To the degree that Christopher Brunel can so confuse the film with a slice of life that he can reprove me for not being "moved by the struggles of the Mexican Americans for a better life", the social realist method has succeeded, with him at least. *Salt* wasn't a strike, it was a movie; but the confusion goes to the heart of the propagandistic aesthetic—you're considered a strike-breaker if you didn't like it.

Communist propagandists do not attack the values of American prosperity because that prosperity would be too attractive to poverty-ridden countries. They claim it's an illusion, "a big lie", and that the "real" America is a picture of class war: poor workers are dispossessed, capitalists set race against race, only the plutocrats enjoy the benefits of productivity, etc. (Russian propaganda identifies Cadillacs with capitalists, Americans identify Cadillacs with Negroes.)

G. M. Hoellering is mistaken in thinking that had I not known who made the film, I would not have objected to it. Esperanza tells us that the house belongs to the company "but the flowers, the flowers are ours"—does one have to be briefed? (Did Mr. Hoellering accept the saccharine nobility of Greer Garson or the wartime Claudette Colbert? Why should he be more willing to accept Miss Revueletas' saccharine deprivation?) If we're familiar with propaganda methods we know that "oppressed" women don't have babies like the rest of us, that they go through epic labor pains, with the life force finally triumphant in the birth of the little worker. How else is mediocre propaganda to achieve symbolic stature? When "the oppressed" see themselves as a chosen people, and they certainly do in *Salt*, they become as morally and aesthetically offensive as any other righteous band. If those who made the

film experienced "fearful pressures", so did the Seventh Day Adventists in Hitler's concentration camps—did it ennoble them or make their dogma any more acceptable? A man is ennobled when he fights for a good cause; a cause is not ennobled by fighting men.

At no point did I suggest that Communists, fellow-travellers, or anyone else should be prevented from making movies, publishing books, or otherwise addressing the public. But, believing in the free dissemination of ideas, I must defend my right to criticize any of those ideas. Is it in good faith that some of the correspondents set up a double standard—defending freedom of expression for those who would set up an image of a fascist United States, and attacking freedom of expression for anti-Communists as witch-hunting? I cannot accept the implication that because Communists and fellow-travellers have been subjected to some abuse in the United States, they are therefore exempt from analysis of their methods, purposes, and results. Is one not to call a spade a spade, because Senator McCarthy lumps together spades, shovels, and plain garden hoes?

Are we to pretend that there are no spades? Are we to look at *Salt* and say with Mr. Brunel, "All right, so it's propaganda—for a better understanding between races". But why, then, does the film caricature the Anglo-Saxons and why are the representatives of business and government all Anglo-Saxons? If *Salt* is supposed to be an accurate "realistic" picture of the United States, what explains this split—which is at complete variance with the statistical facts of American life?

The social realist aesthetic develops out of a political dogma, and the whole meaning of the aesthetic is that art must, so to speak, pay its way—by serving immediate socio-political ends. When a film is as loaded as *Salt*, surely the critic is obliged to examine what it's aiming at. Or is the film critic supposed to limit himself to sight and sound as if they had no relation to meaning?

Yours faithfully,

PAULINE KAEI.

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(HECHT-LANCASTER continued from page 42)

festival. Reviewed elsewhere in this issue, this light, intimate and touching study of everyday life in an Italian-American community of New York is a film of fresh and individual flavour. Without diminishing the creative responsibilities of writer and director, one must pay tribute to Hecht for his flair in initiating and supervising the project, for his choice of Delbert Mann, the young director who first mounted *Marty* on television, to make the film, and for the venturesome casting of Ernest Borgnine and Betsy Blair, all of which shows a taste for experiment from which much is to be hoped. The author of *Marty*, Paddy Chayefsky, has written a handful of television plays which show a more penetrating grasp of the medium than any others; his talent for human observation and eccentric colloquial dialogue reminds one sometimes of Saroyan or Lardner. This kind of writing is welcome in the American cinema, and the fact that Hecht has acquired two more of his plays, and intends to present a third on Broadway, indicates the type of material that interests him—and in Hollywood today such a taste is rare and salutary.

The future Hecht-Lancaster plans, indeed, promise a development in both directions. Carol Reed is now directing *Trapeze*, a circus melodrama, with Lancaster and Gina Lollobrigida, and a Paris background for which the Cirque d'Hiver is being used; there are three adventure films in preparation—*Elephant Bill*, to be made later this year in Burma with Humphrey Bogart, James Michener's *Until They Sail*, to be made in New Zealand with Lancaster, and a Western from an A. B. Guthrie novel, *The Way West*; and, of course, there are the further projects with Chayefsky. With all this, the company seems on its way to establishing a firm and likeable level.

(FRITZ LANG continued from page 21)

4

In *You and Me* the method breaks down because the scheme itself is not valid. A reformed gangster working in a big store whose manager has the liberal policy of employing a quota of ex-convicts to help them go straight, falls in love with a girl there, unaware that she has a criminal past and is still on parole. Helen marries Joe, but has to invent excuses to keep the marriage secret because criminals on parole are forbidden to marry. When he discovers her past, the embittered Joe rejoins old colleagues and engages in a raid on the store. At the last moment Helen causes a change of heart in the gang, and a baby reconciles the couple. Unlike the two preceding films, the central motivation is psychological, proceeding from the relationship between Joe and Helen; Joe reverts to crime not on account of social pressures but of his discovery of Helen's past, just as her attempt to deceive him springs from fear of losing his love. One can argue that society is responsible because it made the law that criminals on parole may not marry, but to elevate this to a tragic "injustice" is fairly absurd. The central relationship, as scripted by Virginia Van Upp, again from a story by Norman Krasna, directed by Lang and acted by George Raft and Sylvia Sidney, fails to convince. Apart from Raft's wooden performance and Sylvia Sidney's overly nervous one, the falsity seems to come from the fact that the light intimate tone adopted for these passages is not suited to Lang. Aware of this, perhaps, he also places undue emphasis on stylistic trappings. The film opens with a montage sequence set to a Kurt Weill ballad—"You cannot get something for nothing, only a chump would try it"—which sets a note of wry sympathy for the poor and under-privileged in a heartless world, but has little to do with the story itself. (It only inflates the significance of the first incident, in which Sylvia Sidney detects a shoplifter in the store.) As an experiment it is not very successful either, for the images are mainly no more than literal illustrations to the words; and the two other semi-expressionist sequences with music by Weill—a dance-hall number and a gangster mob's Thanksgiving Night reunion at which, to rhythmic dialogue, a common prison experience is evoked—are hardly more integrated into the general texture of the film. The dance-hall song has some point, as its tale of parted underworld lovers conjures up a series of images in Helen's mind.

The style, however—bizarre dockland cafés with a sailor bearing a parrot on his shoulder, a hammock in which giant starfish recline, flamingo statues and a clientèle straight from *Drei-groschenoper*—is hardly appropriate to working class life in America.

These setpieces, and the generally over-emphatic visual style—the intense *chiaroscuro* and menacing shadows of, for instance, the scene when Joe and Helen come back to her lodgings after getting married—also deflect from what should have been the film's true purpose: the penetration of American life on a more personal, intimate level than Lang was, perhaps, equipped yet to achieve. The abstractions now exist in a vacuum. As the introductory sequence vaguely reproaches society, so the prison-evocation relates back to *You Only Live Once*; but in fact society (the progressive store manager) is positive, and its only negative action is to forbid paroled people to marry. Other types from the earlier films appear on the fringe of this one, notably the store manager's disapproving wife (a replica of the governor's wife in *You Only Live Once*), but even Helen's parole-officer is reasonable and well-intentioned. There is, in fact, no subject. One's eye is caught from time to time by some calculated, slightly old-fashioned devices—"The Big Shot," head of the gang, who is seen only once from the back, the vast pocked fleshy neck of a man answering the telephone: the gang entering the store at night and the beams of their torches picking out incongruous objects, a model soldier, a wax mannequin, a kitty car (in which one of the mob later sits and plays): the huge shadows, against the blind over a lighted window, of two billiards players in a poolroom, dominating the empty sidewalk.

(to be continued)

(SPECTACLE continued from page 27)

described by Terry Ramsaye:

Edwards established himself as a creative historian by presenting King Solomon without a beard, on the ground that "no motion picture audience would stand for Sheba falling in love with a set of whiskers."

The costume for Sheba herself (a photograph heads this article) is a masterpiece of imaginative reconstruction, as stylish in its frightful way as a design by Berain or Boquet. Such imaginative design has invariably excelled the archaeological approach; it admits of style. With film design it is, as Fischer complained: ". . . le costume d'opéra, étant désormais consacré à l'histoire, n'a plus d'histoire." The peak of imaginative reconstruction is still Griffith's Hall of Belshazzar—"The Hall over a mile long, imaged after the splendour of an olden time." The result is vastly superior to, say, the Huguenot sequences, which have the dull, style-less quality of a mid-Victorian historical painter.

Such large claims and large creations were necessarily backed by pretensions of Art, which in the early days were realised through the titles, whose tones were often the high-flown dialogue of the spectacle theatre. An outstanding example—the English titles to Gallone's *Gli Ultimi Giorni di Pompei*—comes from as late as 1928:

Wait!

I know no philtre which would cause

The God of Love to miss his prey

Once marked. But . . .

There is still a way!

The Grampian Hills, a century and a half away, are in clear view.

Since the days of sound, however, the pretensions have generally been Religious rather than Artistic. On every score, as de Mille has often said and demonstrated, Religion is safer than Art. It is impeccable; it disarms the good and thrills the wicked. Yet even so considerable and sanguine an authority as J. Arthur Rank has questioned whether the message of religion really reaches the audience:

When he had made his film *Samson and Delilah*, my friend Cecil B. de Mille sent me over a copy to look at. I saw it and realised it was a good film with a real message. Some time afterwards I asked an exhibitor, "How is this film going?" He said it was going very well, the audience liked it very much. I asked him, "Yes,



but do they get the message?" He looked at me as if I wasn't right and said, "What message?"

The message failed of its destination, perhaps, because the moral intent of the most high-minded spectacle film must be sullied by the final—and as it seems the indispensable—ornament of the type—Sex. The direct sexuality of the ubiquitous dancing girls—an indispensable long before Ruth St. Denks cavorted in *Intolerance*—is obvious, but the spectacle film has always shown a rather evasive attitude towards the sexuality of its principals—an attitude derived partly from the spectacle theatre, partly from the prudery imposed by religious subjects. The deficiency is supplied by the even more titillating by-ways of sex. Sadism reached its cinematic perfection with de Mille and Gance; but it was there long before them. Of *The Sign of the Cross*, James Agate wrote:

There is sadism in both the general and the particular. . . . It was indeed a touch of genius in Wilson Barrett to add the torturing of the individual Stephanus whom the audience knows, to the larger-scale but less identifiable lacerations of the circus. . . . It goes without saying that whatever the theatre did with this material the film must be able to do infinitely better.

De Mille, indeed, did wonders with it all, and his film is a veritable anthology of sex and sadism. The round-limbed, high-school Stephanus is first subjected to smoky tortures of the flesh, and then to tear-drenched, and even more actual lacerations of the spirit. The massacre of the Christians is illuminated by such homely details as a shot of a little girl struggling to tear an arrow out of her dead mother's breast (a detail paralleled in *The Egyptian* in Edmund Purdom's momentary indecision as to which side of the arrow he shall come upon the lips of the dying Jean Simmons). De Mille's masterpiece is the arena sequence, cutting elegantly between the writhing, romping, bleeding thighs there; the cooler love-battles of Fredric March and Elissa Landi; and the epicene Nero, attended by a naked youth who languidly offers fruit from a basket—"Charles Laughton . . . playing that emperor as the flaunting extravagant quean he probably was" (*James Agate*).

#### VII

Yet, notwithstanding these ravishing embellishments, the spectacle film has declined. The falling-off is not entirely the result of changed economics which will permit no return to the splendours of *Intolerance* or *Cabiria*. As we have seen, the spectacular element in the cinema must be viewed as an unnatural extension of the life of the realistic-romantic theatre. Yet a drama—particularly a debased, unliterary drama—is not created by its artists, but by its audience; and the audience that gave birth to this theatre itself grew out of the industrial, economic and social conditions of early nineteenth-century England. Theatre audiences—as we can gather from the descriptions of Dickens, Mayhew, Grant and Schlesinger—were mainly drawn from the younger representatives of the working classes. Their passionate demand was, as we have seen, for the credible representation of the fantastic, the extravagant, the remote—anything but the here-and-now of their daily lives.

What brought back a more fashionable audience, with more sophisticated tastes, was the eventual aggrandisement, legitimising and respectablising of the realistic-romantic drama, at first in the upholstered Shakespeare of Charles Kean and Samuel Phelps, later in the dressy productions of Irving at the Lyceum. Will Rogers said: "Nothing will kill the cinema but education." The same proved true of the spectacle stage; but the education which killed it was not produced within the theatres; it was attracted from outside, in the form of a more discriminating audience, by the pretensions of the drama itself. The decline began within Irving's lifetime. His ambitious production of *Richard II* was abandoned (1898); his last great spectacle, *Dante*, ran for only 82 performances. The popular audience had left the theatre; by the early 1900's they reappeared in the cinema, still demanding, for a time, the same fantasies, the same escape.

The pattern of decline in interest in the spectacle film closely paralleled the decline of the spectacle drama. The early spectacular film productions, with their bold claims of accuracy, of educational and moral worth, of spiritual wholesomeness, first drew into the cinema more discriminating audiences. When, as a result, the age group became higher and critical standards more exacting, the old dreams would no longer

suffice. But beyond this, the social conditions which created the audience and the demand for the spectacle theatre, and subsequently for the spectacle film, have changed. While the lowest standards of living have risen, our dreams, coming nearer realisation, have dwindled somewhat. The breadth of feasible dreams has shrunk in proportion as the realised dreams have enlarged and solidified. The wishes today's audience demands to see fulfilled are less fantastic, more concrete, more likely, more realistic in current conditions—the dreams first fulfilled, oddly enough, by de Mille, in the school of "social" drama he inaugurated.

#### VIII

Despite this inevitable decline from the unsurpassable zenith of forty years ago—decline of the actual splendours presented, decline of the sense of wonder in the audience, decline of the audience itself—even as late as the present day we have seen a real revival of the *genre*. The special properties of new screen shapes and sizes seemed to demand the spectacle; and the film which launched CinemaScope was a full, latter-day *Sign of the Cross*—*The Robe*. This film and its sequels and imitators (*The Egyptian*, *Demetrius and the Gladiators*) are variations on the old theme—still cashing-in on the certain pay-off on religious subjects. But the critical and public reception of these films suggests that only the novelty of presentation could prolong so late the survival of a worn-out theatrical tradition, whose end was in sight in the theatre of Irving.

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